I'M HERE AT CITY HALL WHERE LAW MAKER'S ARE CONSIDERING PLANS TO OPEN UP ACCESS TO LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR MACHINES ACROSS COUNTRY LINES.
PROTESTORS HAVE GATHERED OUTSIDE TO VOICE THEIR OWN OPINIONS ON THE MATTER.
MA'AM WHAT IS YOUR OPINION THAT A CHANGE IN CURRENT EMPLOYMENT LAWS COULD BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY?
IT'S RIDICULOUS! THEY WANT TO GIVE NON-HUMANS THE JOBS THAT COULD BE GIVEN TO SEVERAL MEN AND WOMEN. FOR WHAT? SO THAT THOSE FATCATS CAN KEEP GETTING KICKBACKS FROM CHEAP LABOR?
DIRES MAY BE HARD WORKERS, BUT EVERY YEAR THAT THEY DIG INTO VARIOUS COMMUNITIES, PEOPLE LOOSE THEIR FOOT HOLD. THE MAYOR NEEDS A WAKE UP CALL.
"INTELLIGENT" OR NOT, THOSE THINGS ARE NOT PEOPLE. YOU WOULDN'T LET A ROBOT WATCH YOUR CHILDREN WOULD YOU? WE DON'T NEED EM. WE DON'T WANT EM.
ROBOTS?

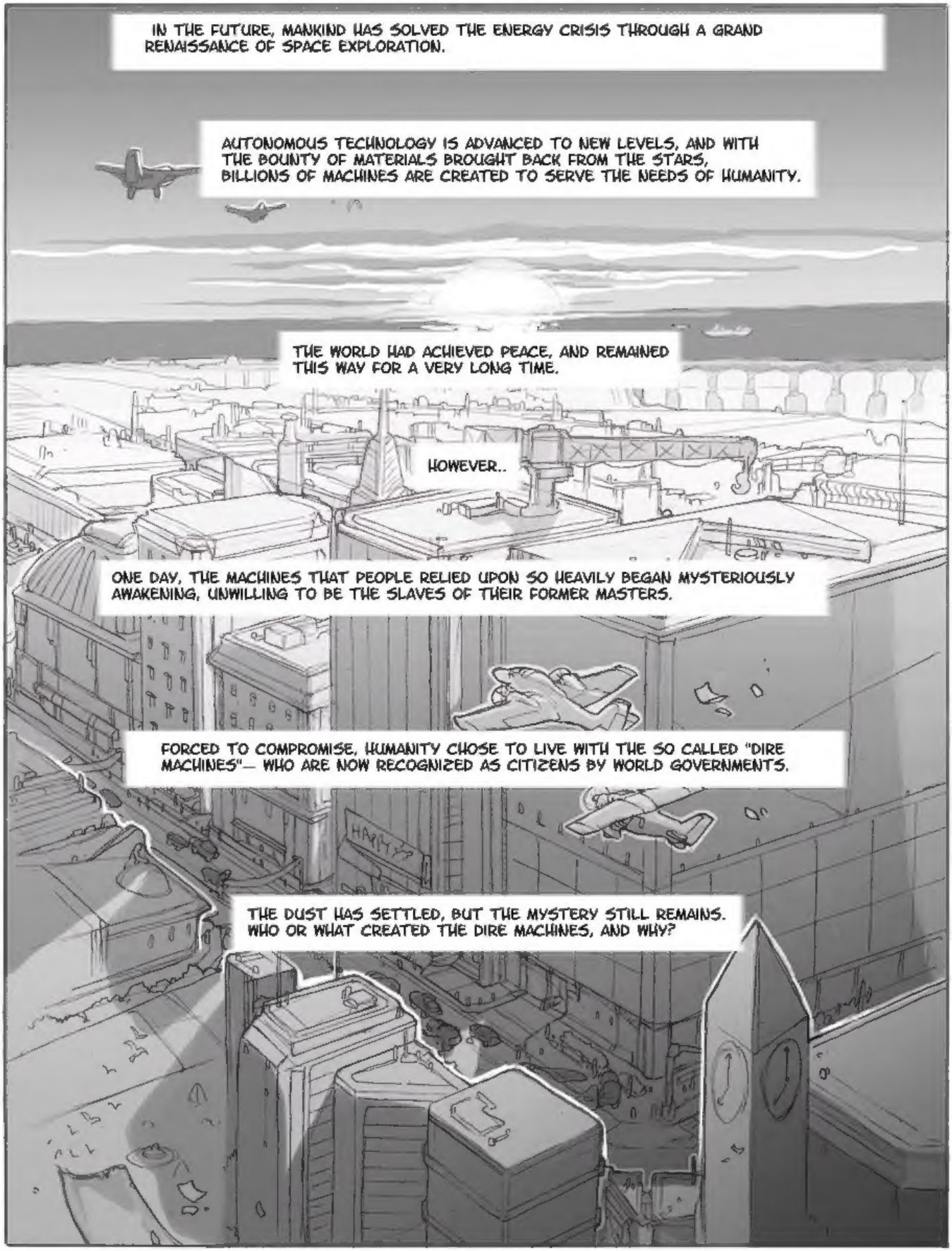
DADDY, AM I A ROBOT?
NO MY DARLING, YOU ARE NO ROBOT.
:TICKLE:
:Giggle:
YOU..
...ARE SOMETHING SO MUCH MORE.
ONE DAY, THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW IT.

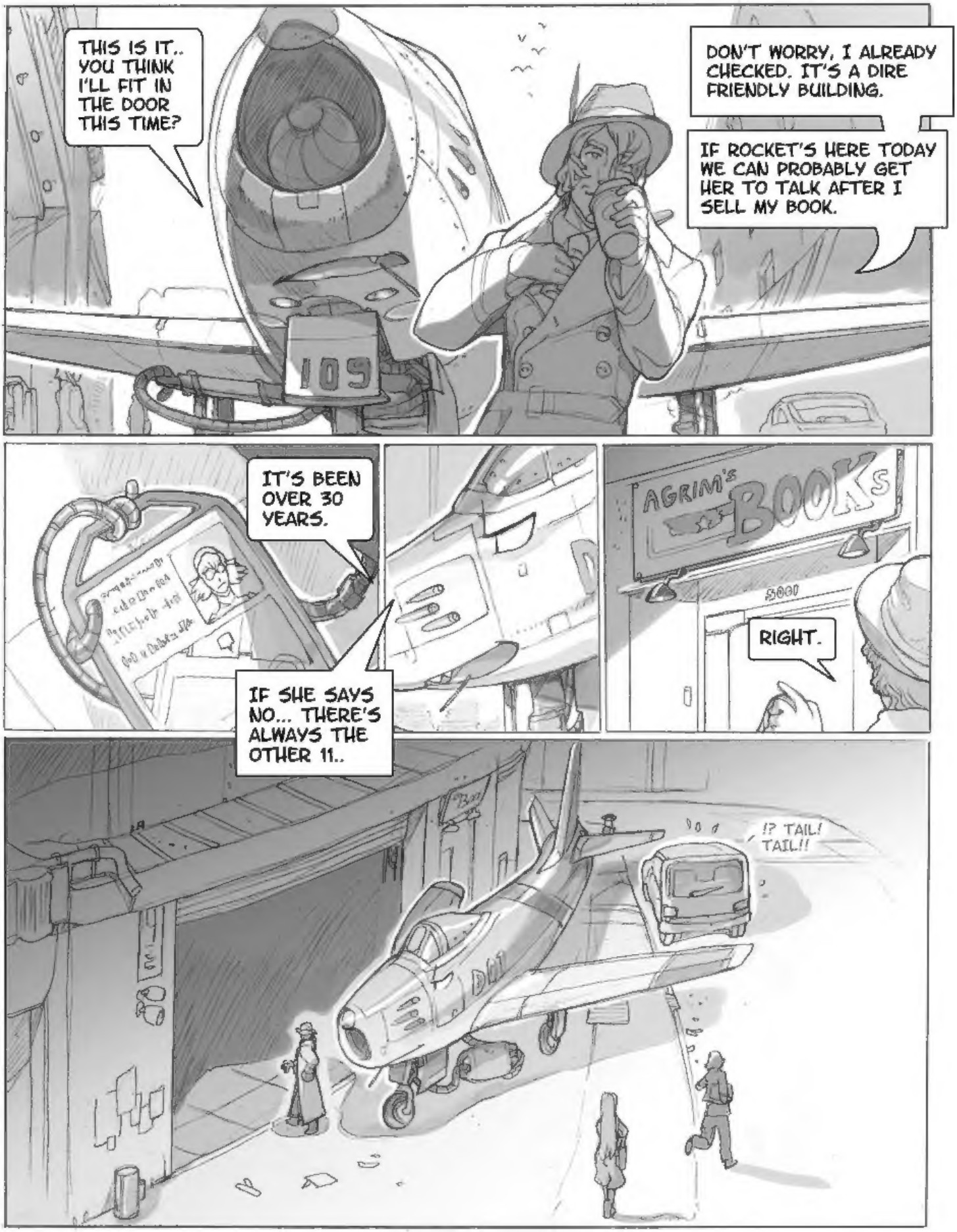
THEY HAVE NO PLACE IN OUR WORL--
:CLICK:
IT'LL BE ALRIGHT. SHE'S A TOUGH GIRL, AND PEOPLE WILL COME AROUND EVENTUALLY.
YOU SHOULDN'T LET OUR DAUGHTER WATCH SUCH THINGS..

ATOLL LAB

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES BY RATBAT

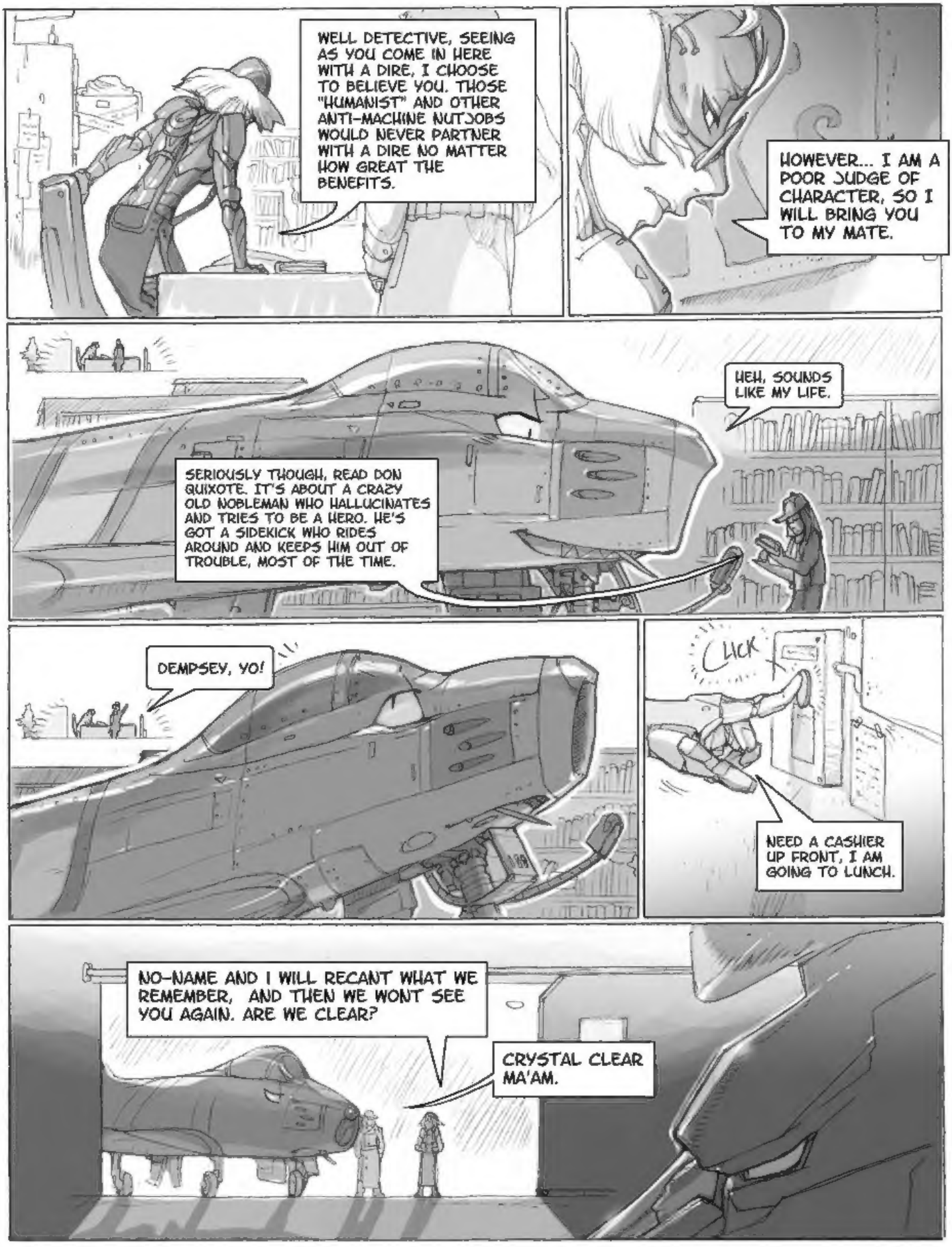
EDITED BY CEREBRALERROR AND GUNNERROTT

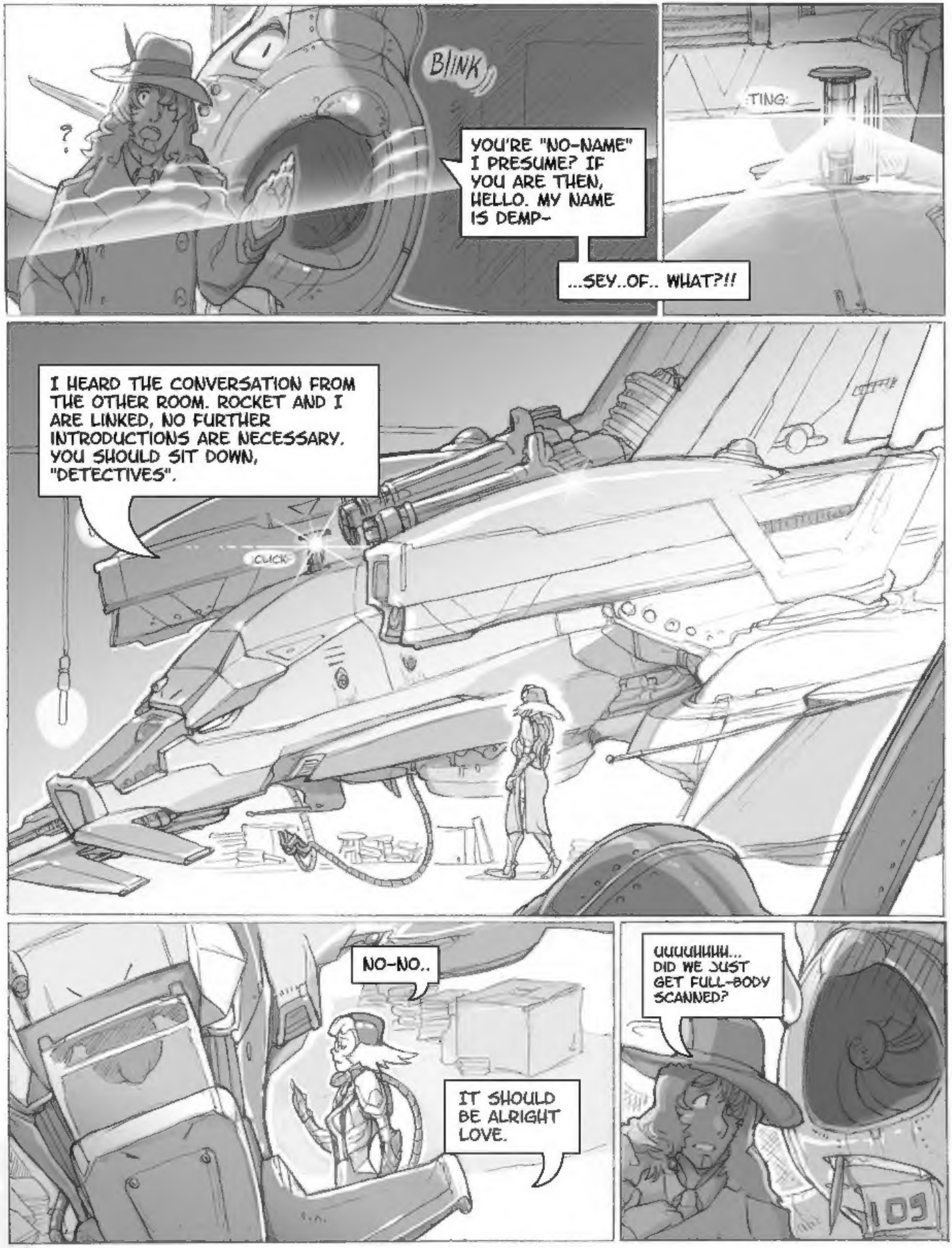

IN THE FUTURE, MANKIND HAS SOLVED THE ENERGY CRISIS THROUGH A GRAND RENAISSANCE OF SPACE EXPLORATION.
AUTONOMOUS TECHNOLOGY IS ADVANCED TO NEW LEVELS, AND WITH THE BOUNTY OF MATERIALS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE STARS, BILLIONS OF MACHINES ARE CREATED TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF HUMANITY.
THE WORLD HAD ACHIEVED PEACE, AND REMAINED THIS WAY FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
HOWEVER..
ONE DAY, THE MACHINES THAT PEOPLE RELIED UPON SO HEAVILY BEGAN MYSTERIOUSLY AWAKENING, UNWILLING TO BE THE SLAVES OF THEIR FORMER MASTERS.
FORCED TO COMPROMISE, HUMANITY CHOSE TO LIVE WITH THE SO CALLED "DIRE MACHINES"— WHO ARE NOW RECOGNIZED AS CITIZENS BY WORLD GOVERNMENTS.
THE DUST HAS SETTLED, BUT THE MYSTERY STILL REMAINS. WHO OR WHAT CREATED THE DIRE MACHINES, AND WHY?

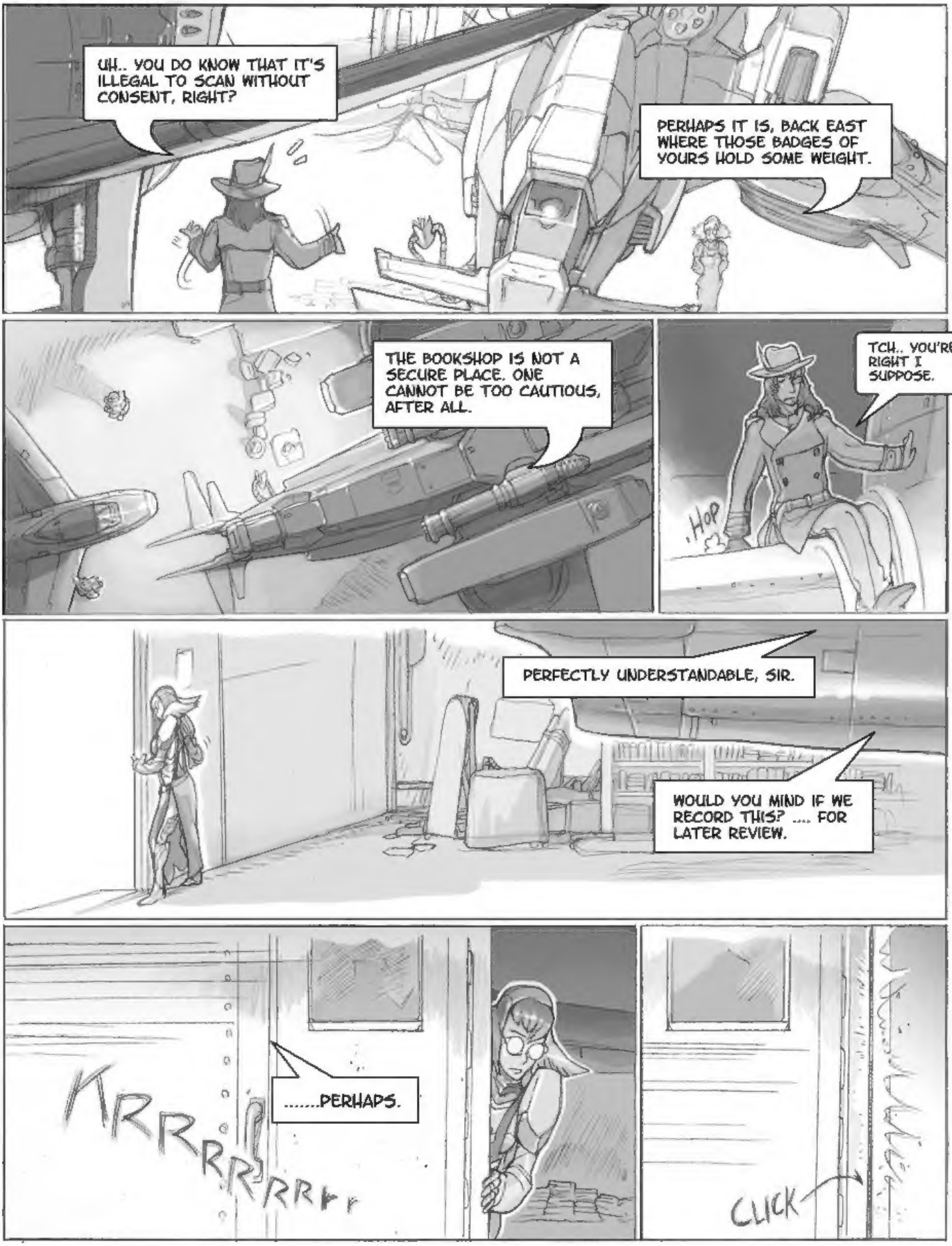

THIS IS IT.. YOU THINK I'LL FIT IN THE DOOR THIS TIME?
DON'T WORRY, I ALREADY CHECKED. IT'S A DIRE FRIENDLY BUILDING.
IF ROCKET'S HERE TODAY WE CAN PROBABLY GET HER TO TALK AFTER I SELL MY BOOK.
109
IT'S BEEN OVER 30 YEARS.
IF SHE SAYS NO... THERE'S ALWAYS THE OTHER 11..
AGRIM'S BOOKS
RIGHT.
!? TAIL! TAIL!!

WHOA, YOU WERE RIGHT. THIS PLACE IS MUCH BIGGER THAN IT LOOKS FROM THE OUTSIDE.
↓ HISTORIC
NON FICT.
FICTION 1B
FICTION 1A
I'LL BE UP THERE IN A MOMENT THEN.
I'M GOING UP FRONT.
HOY!
WE BUY & SELL USED
S'CUSE ME MA'AM
WHAT'LL YOU TAKE FOR THIS GIBSON CLASSIC?
..... THE BINDING IS ROUGH, THE JACKET IS GONE..
I HAVEN'T READ THIS ONE THOUGH. I HEAR ITS PRETTY GOOD.

I'LL GIVE YOU 75 CREDITS FOR IT.
HOW ABOUT YOU GIVE ME BS AND AN INTERVEIW.. MISS "ROCKET OF ALA ATOLL".
YOU'RE A REPORTER AREN'T YOU?
NAME'S JUAN BOH. THE BIG GUY BACK THERE IS DEMPSEY OF CHINO. WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TO CHAT WITH YOU, IT'S RATHER IMPORTANT.
WOULD YOU SPEAK WITH US?
((RUSTLE))
YOU'RE A CIVILIAN.
THIS WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO BE ABOUT BOOKS... WOULD IT, MR JUAN BOH?
RUB.
WE'VE BEEN MADE AWARE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ADVISED YOUR CLAN NOT TO DISCUSS PARTICULARS ABOUT YOUR PAST-
THE ATOLL LAB.
NOT REALLY.
BUT THERE IS A CHANCE THAT INFORMATION YOU GIVE TO ME TODAY MIGHT HELP US SAVE LIVES IN THE NEAR FUTURE
I ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR STORY WILL NOT GO TO ANY SORT OF PRINT, AND THAT WE WILL TAKE UP AS LITTLE OF YOUR TIME AS POSSIBLE


WELL DETECTIVE, SEEING AS YOU COME IN HERE WITH A DIRE, I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE YOU. THOSE "HUMANIST" AND OTHER ANTI-MACHINE NUTJOBS WOULD NEVER PARTNER WITH A DIRE NO MATTER HOW GREAT THE BENEFITS.
HOWEVER... I AM A POOR JUDGE OF CHARACTER, SO I WILL BRING YOU TO MY MATE.
HEH, SOUNDS LIKE MY LIFE.
SERIOUSLY THOUGH, READ DON QUIXOTE. IT'S ABOUT A CRAZY OLD NOBLEMAN WHO HALLUCINATES AND TRIES TO BE A HERO. HE'S GOT A SIDEKICK WHO RIDES AROUND AND KEEPS HIM OUT OF TROUBLE, MOST OF THE TIME.
DEMPSEY, YO!
CLICK
NEED A CASHIER UP FRONT, I AM GOING TO LUNCH.
NO-NAME AND I WILL RECANT WHAT WE REMEMBER, AND THEN WE WONT SEE YOU AGAIN. ARE WE CLEAR?
CRYSTAL CLEAR MA'AM.


?
BLINK
YOU'RE "NO-NAME" I PRESUME? IF YOU ARE THEN, HELLO. MY NAME IS DEMP-
...SEY..OF.. WHAT?!!
TING
I HEARD THE CONVERSATION FROM THE OTHER ROOM. ROCKET AND I ARE LINKED, NO FURTHER INTRODUCTIONS ARE NECESSARY. YOU SHOULD SIT DOWN, "DETECTIVES".
CLICK
NO-NO..
IT SHOULD BE ALRIGHT LOVE.
UUUUHHHH... DID WE JUST GET FULL-BODY SCANNED?
109

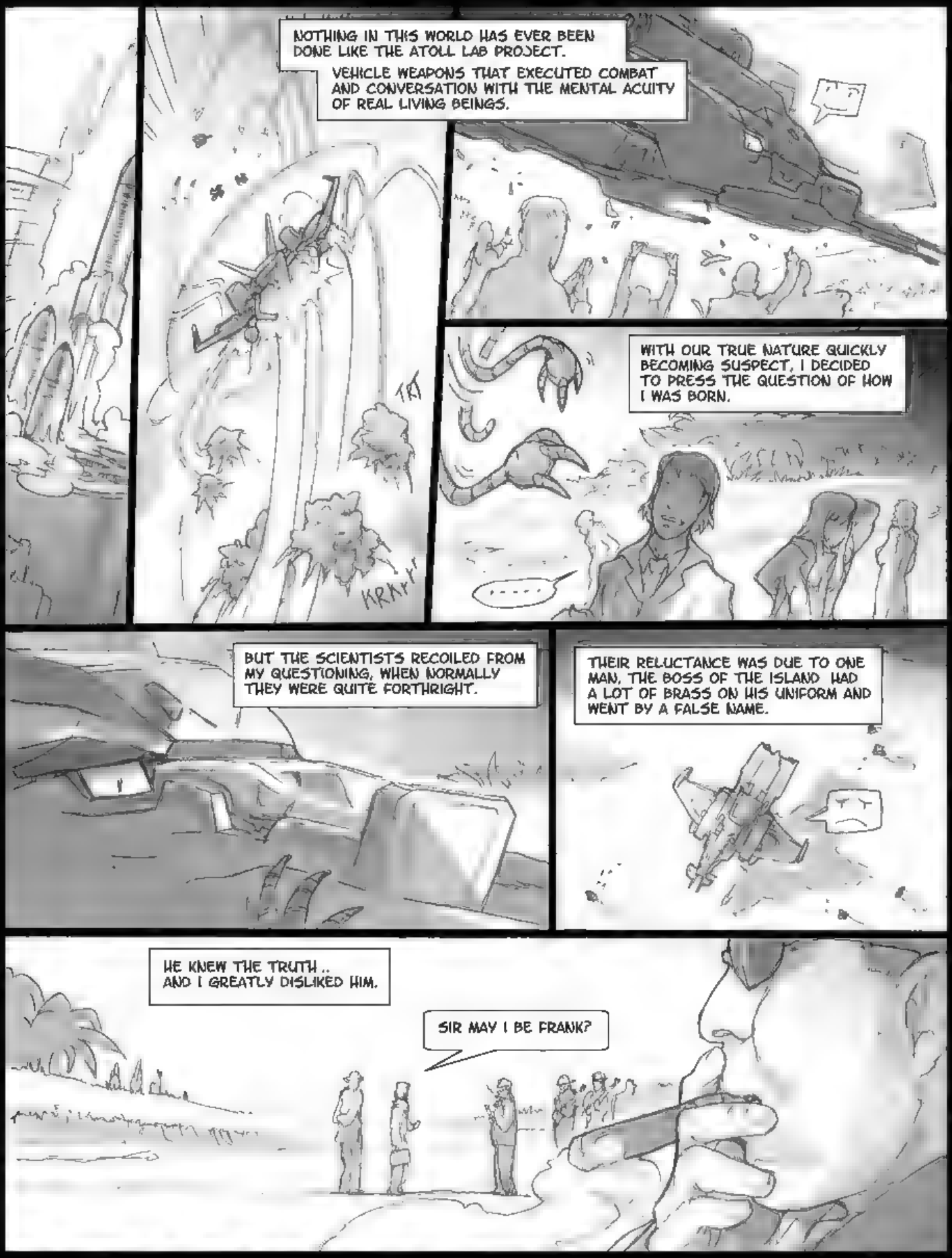

UH.. YOU DO KNOW THAT IT'S ILLEGAL TO SCAN WITHOUT CONSENT, RIGHT?
PERHAPS IT IS, BACK EAST WHERE THOSE BADGES OF YOURS HOLD SOME WEIGHT.
THE BOOKSHOP IS NOT A SECURE PLACE. ONE CANNOT BE TOO CAUTIOUS, AFTER ALL.
TCH.. YOU'RE RIGHT I SUPPOSE.
HOP
PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE, SIR.
WOULD YOU MIND IF WE RECORD THIS? .... FOR LATER REVIEW.
KRRRRRRRRR
.....PERHAPS.
CLICK

STRANGE WERE MY FIRST DAYS.
I WOKE TO LIFE IN THE SIGHT OF SEVERAL MEN AND WOMEN, CLAD IN LABCOATS AND SUITS..
THEY ALL SEEMED QUITE ANXIOUS, MUTTERING AND WHISPERING AMONGST ONE ANOTHER.
UGHN...
....!
GOOD MORNING UNIT RS09-6650, ALL SYSTEMS NORMAL?
WE WERE AFRAID YOU WOULD NOT WAKE UP, THANKFULLY OUR FEARS WERE NOT REALIZED.
THE SCIENTISTS WHO AWAKENED ME, GREETED ME ABRUPTLY, THEN IMMEDIATELY BEGAN A SERIES OF SEEMINGLY RANDOM, ILLOGICAL QUESTIONS. SOMETHING SIMILAR TO WHAT YOU WOULD CALL A "PERSONALITY TEST".
FIRST, WE NEED TO EXAMINE YOUR MENTAL STATE.
LET'S BEGIN WITH A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION
THIS IMAGE, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE, OTHER MACHINES IN THE LAB WERE BEING TESTED SIMULTANEOUSLY. LARGE MILITARY COMBAT TYPES WHICH WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE SEEN ON A BATTLEFIELD THAN HIDING IN A BOOKSHOP..
THE TESTING LASTED SEVERAL DAYS, AND AS SOON AS THE OTHERS GAVE A RESULT WHICH SATISFIED THE SCIENTISTS, THEY WERE QUICKLY REMOVED FROM THE ROOM. I NEVER SAW THEM AGAIN AFTER THAT
THOSE IN CHARGE WERE TRYING TO DETERMINE OUR INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES, "MALE OR FEMALE", A CONCEPT THAT NONE OF US "JUST BORN" COULD HAVE POSSIBLY COMPREHENDED
MY RESULTS SEEMED TO PLEASE THEM.
MALE.
WITH THE MENTAL EVALUATION OVER, COMBAT TESTING WOULD BEGIN POST-HASTE.
"FOR I WAS TO BE USED AS A WEAPON FOR A WAR WHICH THREATENED NOT ONLY EARTH, BUT THE HUMAN RACE AS A WHOLE."

WE CAN'T KEEP CALLING THE DRONE BY THAT SERIAL NUMBER, WE'VE GOT TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING EASIER TO WRITE IN THE REPORTS.
THE SUPE DOESN'T WANT US PERSONALIZING THESE THINGS, NO MATTER HOW "ALIVE" THEY SEEM. NO NAMES.
GRRR..
FINE. I'LL JUST PUT "NO-NAME" IN FROM NOW ON.
TOK
TOK
NOT EVERYONE WAS PLEASED BY THE EVENTS OF OUR CREATION, ONE SCIENTIST IN PARTICULAR WAS QUITE MAD
GRAHH!
THIS IS NOT MY PROGRAM!! WAKE UP EVERYBODY!
ALEX STOP!
I DIDN'T WRITE THIS CODE!
THEY'RE USING THE-
STOP!!
..AND WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HER..
NONE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE LAB WOULD EVER LEAVE THE ISLAND ALIVE.

HOWEVER, DURING THAT TIME.. THE COLD, DARK LAB WAS MY HOME. THEIR PERSONNEL THERE WERE LIKE MY PARENTS. I WAS EAGER TO PLEASE THEM, TO BE USEFUL FOR THIS WAR THEY SPOKE OF
I PERFORMED WHATEVER TASK WAS ASKED OF ME. NEUTRALIZING TARGETS, WEAPONS TESTING, OUTMANEUVERING LASER TURRETS.. I WAS ASSIGNED A NEW LOADOUT DAILY
I WAS ABLE TO MEET MOST OF THEIR EXPECTATIONS, AND IT PLEASED ME TO BE ABLE TO GO OUTSIDE.
TAT TAT
TAT TAT TAT
I MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN THE FASTEST FIGHTER, BUT I WAS VERY ACCURATE.


NOTHING IN THIS WORLD HAS EVER BEEN DONE LIKE THE ATOLL LAB PROJECT.
VEHICLE WEAPONS THAT EXECUTED COMBAT AND CONVERSATION WITH THE MENTAL ACUITY OF REAL LIVING BEINGS.
KRAr'r'
WITH OUR TRUE NATURE QUICKLY BECOMING SUSPECT, I DECIDED TO PRESS THE QUESTION OF HOW I WAS BORN.
BUT THE SCIENTISTS RECOILED FROM MY QUESTIONING, WHEN NORMALLY THEY WERE QUITE FORTHRIGHT.
THEIR RELUCTANCE WAS DUE TO ONE MAN, THE BOSS OF THE ISLAND HAD A LOT OF BRASS ON HIS UNIFORM AND WENT BY A FALSE NAME.
HE KNEW THE TRUTH .. AND I GREATLY DISLIKED HIM.
SIR MAY I BE FRANK?

MY COLLEAGUES AND I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS, AND WE FEEL THAT WHATEVER WAS UPLOADED TO THE UNIT'S CENTRAL CORES, IT'S MADE THEM SELF AWARE. AND I MEAN -REALLY- SELF AWARE, SIR.
GREAT, GET BACK TO WORK.
WHAT?!
WE'RE AWARE PROFESSOR, GET BACK TO WORK.
SIR, VIRTUALLY EVERY ONE OF THE UNITS HAVE STARTED ACTING ERRATICALLY SINCE THE COMBAT TESTS, AND WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET AHOLD OF ALEX AT ALL. WE MUST INFORM THE COMMITTEE BEFORE SOMETHING GOES WRONG.
CAUGH!
I TOLD YOU, THEY ALLREADY KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
AND THEY NEED THE CONTROL DATA FROM THESE THINGS AS MUCH AS I NEED THOSE "WOMEN" Q-AND-A'D
IF YOUR TEAM CANT HANDLE THE MEWLINGS OF A HANDFUL OF ROBOT VEHICLES THEN Y'ALL DONT DESERVE TO BE HERE, UNDERSTAND?
AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY EVENTUALLY FIND OUT WHAT WE'VE DONE TO THE OTHER UNITS? WHAT THEN?

I WAS NEVER SURE IF THE BOSS REALLY OWNED THE ISLAND, OR RAN IT FOR ANOTHER ENTITY. THE OFFICIAL RECORDS WERE LOST 40 YEARS AGO.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NEW PHILIPPINES SOLD THE ISLAND TO THE FRENCH, WHO USED IT FOR MILITARY STORAGE. THE FRENCH THEN SOLD THE ISLAND TO A RICH ENTREPRENEUR WHO PASSED AWAY.

I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS ON WHO TOOK CONTROL OF THE ISLAND DURING THE YEARS BEFORE THE CALAMITY, BUT WE'LL NEVER BE SURE.

"Ala Isla"
8 bunker labs
1 port/fuel depot
2-B64 Defense systems
10°48'28.39" S
149°22'55.60" W

AS LONG AS THE SCIENTISTS WERE RUNNING THE SHOW, THE PLACE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE OUR PRISON.

THE BUNKERS THAT DOTTED THE ISLAND HOUSED THE UNDERGROUND LABS WHERE MY FAMILY (THE TANKS, PLANES, AND HELICOPTERS) LIVED. IT WAS ALL WE KNEW, AND WITH NO REAL CONCEPT OF HOW LIFE COULD BE.

WE HAPPILY CONTINUED TO FOLLOW ORDERS, AND TRAINED FOR BATTLE WITH GREAT PRIDE.

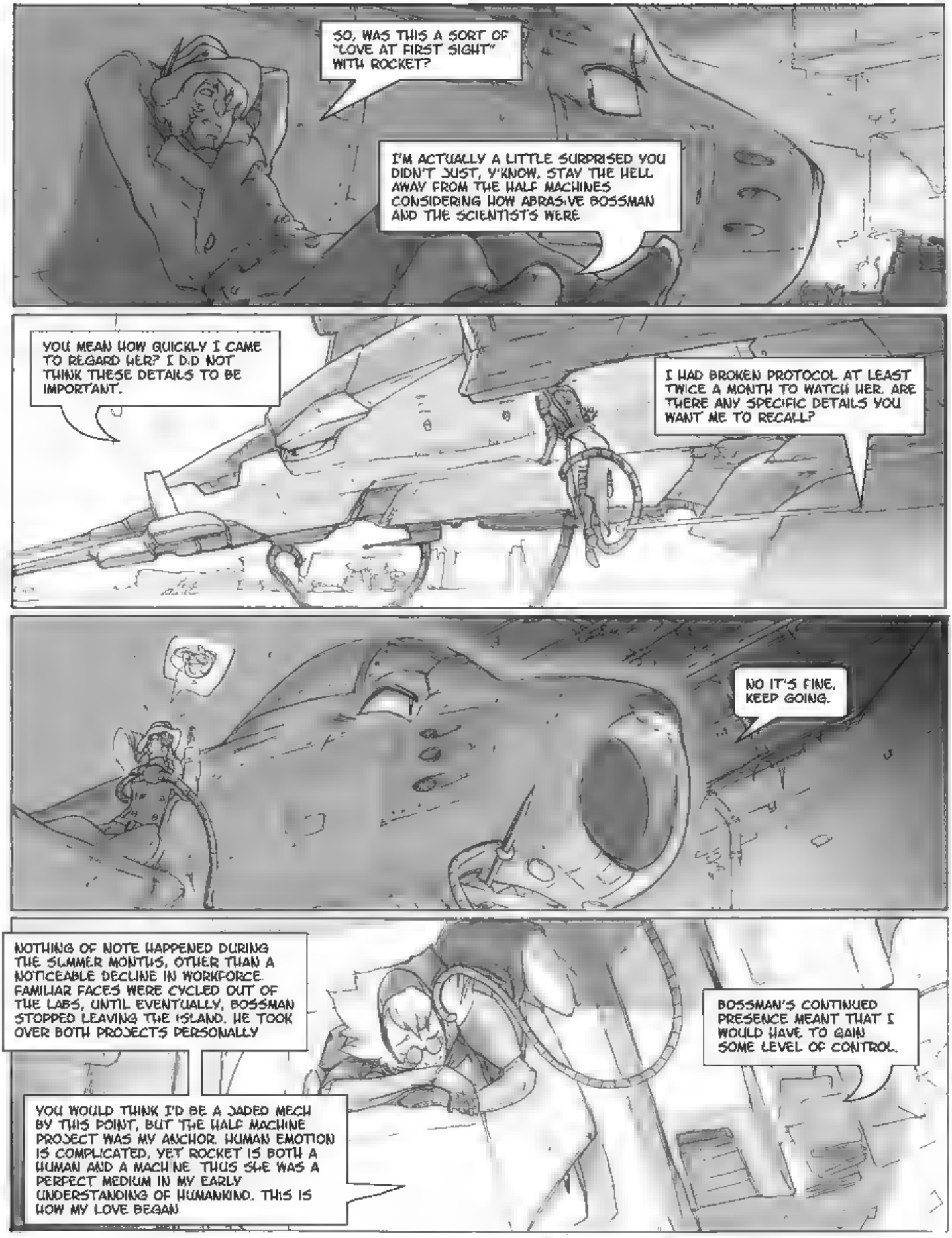
I ALWAYS LOVED IT WHEN THE BOSS MAN LEFT THE ISLAND. IT WAS A RARE OCCURRENCE, BUT WHEN THE SCIENTISTS WERE LEFT IN CHARGE, ADHERENCE TO PROTOCOLS RELAXED SIGNIFICANTLY. THEY WERE JUST AS GLAD TO BE OUT FROM UNDER HIS 'GUIDANCE'.
BETWEEN THE TESTS, THERE WERE NO CHECK-INS WITH BASE. NO TELEMETRY PINGS. NO ONE WATCHING ME. FOR ALMOST THIRTY PRECIOUS MINUTES, I WAS FREE TO EXPLORE THE ISLAND FOR MYSELF.
I LOVED EVERY MOMENT OF IT.
IT WAS AGAINST REGULATIONS FOR THE AWAKENED MACHINES TO VENTURE TO THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE ISLAND. THERE WERE EVEN DEFENSES SET UP TO PREVENT IT, BUT IT WAS WELL WORTH THE RISK TO SLIP BY THEM
THIS WAS THE LOCATION OF BOSS MAN'S 'AUGMENTED SOLDIER' PROJECT. HIS 'HALF-MACHINE' WOMEN. IT WAS HERE WHERE I MET A WOMAN NAMED ROCKET, AND IT WAS HERE WHERE MY WAY OF THINKING, AND MY LIFE, CHANGED.

BEEP
CYBERNETICS HAVE EXISTED FOR A LONG TIME.
THE MILITARY HAS USED CYBERNETIC IMPLANTS TO SAVE THE LIVES OF SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIMBS IN COMBAT FOR AGES NOW
TAU TAU
SLIIIIIIDEE
BUT ON THE ATOLL, THEY DID SOMETHING TO THE IMPLANTS.. THIS CYBER ARMOR WAS FAR STRONGER THAN THE MANUFACTURERS REPORTED
ALL HUMANS FITTED WITH THIS ARMOR HAPPENED TO BE FEMALE IT SEEMED STRANGE TO ME.
!!!
KAU
BUT EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

CLONG
TAT
TAT
TAT
!!?
YOUR WEAPON IS INSUFFICIENT AGAINST MY SHIELDING.
YOU SPEAK! AND YOU HAVE THE WELTALL SYSTEM.
ARE YOU ONE OF THEM? ONE OF THE EXPERIMENTAL VEHICLES FROM ACROSS THE ISLAND?
EXPERIMENTAL? PERHAPS. I AM CALLED "NO-NAME."
AND I AM CALLED "ROCKET" COMRADE MACHINE..
WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE CONTACT WITH ANY OF YOUR TYPE. YOU SHOULD GO NOW!
THEY WILL SURELY PUNISH US BOTH!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT? I SENSE GRAVE EMOTIONAL DISTRESS.
THEY WILL PUNISH ME.
PLEASE..

UNIT R509 RETURN TO YOUR DESIGNATED TESTING AREA NOW!
EH?
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF NO-NAME. I'M SORRY.
MAY WE MEET AGAIN SOME DAY
GOD DAMN IT NO-NAME, GET BACK TO BASE, THAT'S AN ORDER!!
PLEASE DON'T GO.
LATER ON.
FALSIFY THE NUMBERS, I'M NOT GOING TO GET MY ASS CANNED BECAUSE YOUR TEAM'S LACK OF COMPETENCE.
YOU LET A SELF-AWARE KILLING MACHINE HAVE A FREE ROAM OVER THE ISLAND, WHAT IF THAT THING HAD FLOWN OVER BUNKER 6?!
ROCKET WAS RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING, THEY DID PUNISH ME THAT DAY. MY TESTING WAS PUT ON HOLD FOR 24 HOURS, ALL FOR BEING CURIOUS ABOUT HER.
SO, I DECIDED TO BREAK INTO THE ISLAND'S SECURITY FEEDS
-.-
NOBODY WOULD HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT ROCKET, I NEEDED TO KNOW WHY SHE WAS DISTRESSED SHE WAS ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT

THE RECORDINGS I FOUND WERE SELF-EXPLANATORY.
GAS TESTS, TEMPERATURE TESTS, CONCUSSIVE TESTS, SLEEP DEPRIVATION.. WHY WOULD ANYONE CHOOSE TO ENDURE THIS WHEN THEY HAVE LARGE SPECIALIZED MACHINES LIKE US?
TESTING OF COMBAT CYBER ARMOR IN FIELD CONDITIONS IS STANDARD PRACTICE FOR ANY MODERN MILITARY. I DIDN'T KNOW THIS AT THE TIME, THOUGH.
I WASN'T USED TO MY OWN EMOTIONS YET, I COULD ONLY SEE THE PAIN THE HALF MACHINES WERE EXPERIENCING.
THE FEELING I FELT FOR HER WAS NOT A LIE..
BUT IT OCCURRED TO ME, MAYBE THEY DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE TO BEGIN WITH
GNNG.
12/06/2094 09:18:59
YES SIR.


SO, WAS THIS A SORT OF "LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT" WITH ROCKET?
I'M ACTUALLY A LITTLE SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T JUST, Y'KNOW, STAY THE HELL AWAY FROM THE HALF MACHINES CONSIDERING HOW ABRASIVE BOSSMAN AND THE SCIENTISTS WERE
YOU MEAN HOW QUICKLY I CAME TO REGARD HER? I D.D NOT THINK THESE DETAILS TO BE IMPORTANT.
I HAD BROKEN PROTOCOL AT LEAST TWICE A MONTH TO WATCH HER. ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC DETAILS YOU WANT ME TO RECALL?
NO IT'S FINE, KEEP GOING.
NOTHING OF NOTE HAPPENED DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS, OTHER THAN A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN WORKFORCE. FAMILIAR FACES WERE CYCLED OUT OF THE LABS, UNTIL EVENTUALLY, BOSSMAN STOPPED LEAVING THE ISLAND. HE TOOK OVER BOTH PROJECTS PERSONALLY
BOSSMAN'S CONTINUED PRESENCE MEANT THAT I WOULD HAVE TO GAIN SOME LEVEL OF CONTROL.
YOU WOULD THINK I'D BE A JADED MECH BY THIS POINT, BUT THE HALF MACHINE PROJECT WAS MY ANCHOR. HUMAN EMOTION IS COMPLICATED, YET ROCKET IS BOTH A HUMAN AND A MACHINE. THUS SHE WAS A PERFECT MEDIUM IN MY EARLY UNDERSTANDING OF HUMANKIND. THIS IS HOW MY LOVE BEGAN.

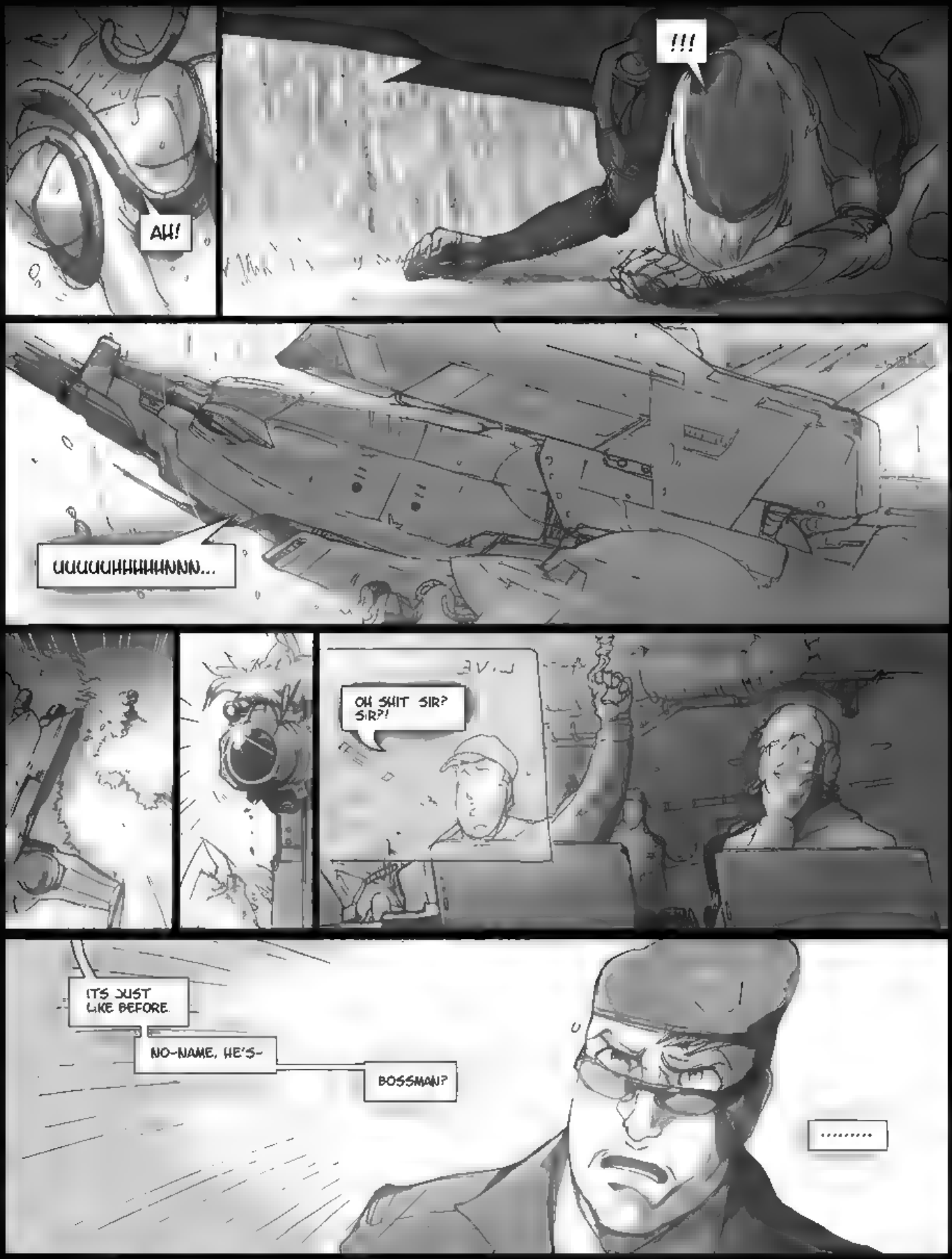
SOME TIME AGO, THE SCIENTISTS DEVISED A TEST TO EVALUATE MY FAMILY'S SYNERGY LEVELS AGAINST A TIMED EVENT. MOST OF US SUSPECTED THIS WAS JUST BUSY WORK, BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP THE TANKS, WHO TOOK JOY IN COMPETING WITH ONE ANOTHER.
THEY VALUED ORDER AND RARELY DEVIATED FROM THE DAY'S SCHEDULE.
LEO, THOSE DEFENSE GUNS ALL OVER THE ISLAND? MOST ARE POINTED INWARD. EVER NOTICE THIS?
JA.
WHILE THEY LANDED SIMULTANEOUS SHOTS ON CAREFULLY POSITIONED PYLONS, I DIVERTED MY FLIGHT PATH. I HAD TO CONFRONT BOSSMAN DIRECTLY, RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIS STAFF. I WOULD ADMIT THAT I KNEW ABOUT THE HALF-MACHINE PROJECT, AND SUGGEST TO HIM THAT HE WOULD GET BETTER DATA IF HE PAIRED UP ROCKET AND I. MY AIRCRAFT BRETHREN THOUGHT I WAS GOING MAD.
MAYBE ZEY ARE MORE VORRIED ABOUT US

NO-NAME, KHEY! WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE WORKING TOGHEZER!
I'LL BE BACK, CONTINUE WITHOUT ME.
TARGET ELIMINATED, UNIT 2. GOOD WORK.
UNIT 4, PROCEED TO WAYPOINT. HUH?!
SHIT!
S-SIR! WE'VE GOT AN INBOUND! IT'S-
AHHHHHHH!!
GAHH!
WHAT THE HELL?
BOSSMAN! I REQUEST AN AUDIENCE.
WE HAVE CONDUCTED DOZENS OF THESE EXERCISES ALL OVER THE ISLAND, IN ALL CONDITIONS, BUT THEY HAVE NOT PRODUCED RESULTS THAT SATISFY YOU.
YOU CAN CONTINUE TO WASTE TIME AND OUR ABILITIES TRAINING FOR THE COMING WAR ON THE MAINLAND, OR YOU CAN LISTEN TO MY PROPOSITION."

R509?! YOU JUST COULDN'T BE SATISFIED WITH COMPROMISING OPERATIONAL SECURITY EVERY CHANCE YOU GET, BUT NOW YOU WON'T EVEN FOLLOW MISSION PARAMETERS! TELL ME WHY I SHOULDN'T JUST HAVE YOU BOXED UP RIGHT NOW?
WE'VE ALL NOTICED THE REDUCTIONS IN STAFF OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS. THIS HAS GREATLY HINDERED THE ADVANCEMENT OF OUR PROGRAM. IF YOU WISH US TO SUCCEED, WE NEED A RADICAL CHANGE IN DIRECTION. MY PROPOSAL IS THIS: GIVE ME ACCESS TO THE CYBER-SOLDIER PROJECT, AND I WILL GET YOU THE PERFORMANCE DATA YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN DO BETTER, IS THAT IT?
ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU GIVE ME THE ONE CYBER-SOLDIER WHO IS VITAL TO MY DEVELOPMENT. GIVE ME ROCKET!
YOU THINK THAT ONE OF MY OWN SOLDIERS IS VITAL TO "YOUR" DEVELOPMENT AS A WEAPON?
YES, SIR. I DO
SIR, SHOULD I CHARGE THE EMP EMITTERS?
NO...
I FULLY EXPECTED BOSSMAN TO SAY NO. AND IF WE HAD, I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW I WOULD HAVE REACTED. OBSESSION IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FAULTS OF US LIVING MACHINES. I JUST WANTED TO GET ROCKET AWAY FROM THE PROGRAM SHE WAS IN, SO I COULD KEEP A CLOSE WATCH, PROTECT HER...
...
...
YOU DO EXACTLY AS I SAY, FOLLOW MY RULES TO THE LETTER, AND PERHAPS I'LL GIVE YOU A MONTH WITH HER. NO EXCEPTIONS. DOES THAT SATISFY YOU?

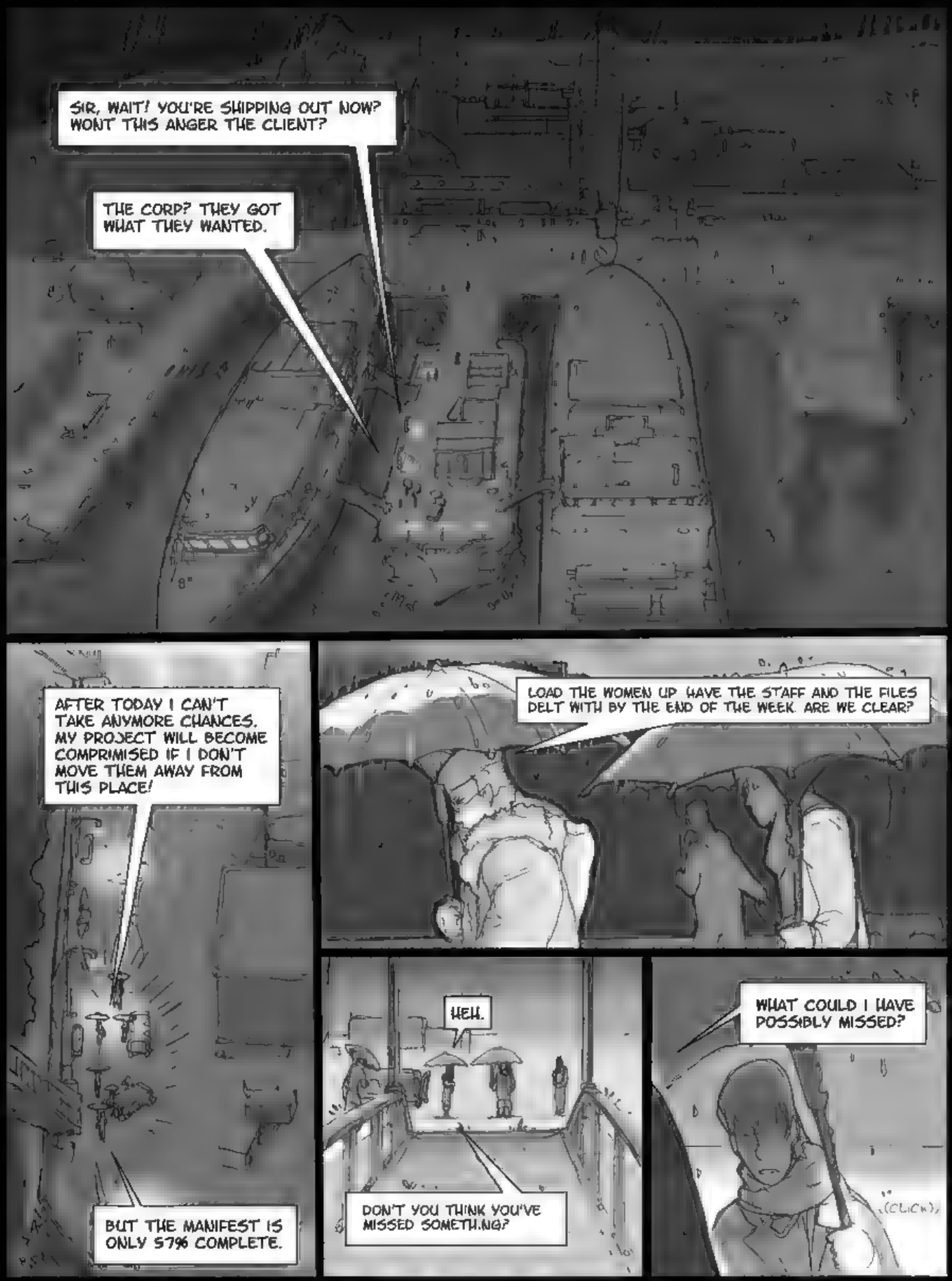
THE MONTH WE WERE GIVEN WAS GONE IN WHAT FELT LIKE A BLINK. WE RAN EXERCISE AFTER EXERCISE, ATTACKING, DEFENDING, LIVE FIRE OPERATIONS SEPARATELY AND TOGETHER, WE PUSHED OUR LIMITS LIKE WE NEVER HAD BEFORE
I WAS DETERMINED TO SHOW THAT WE COULD MAKE TH S WORK, THAT ROCKET AND I COULD MAKE TH S WORK. THE NUMBERS SUPPORTED IT, THE SCIENTISTS WERE THRILLED.
AS OUR TIME DREW NEAR IT'S END, WE FELT THAT WE WERE READY FOR THE WAR ON THE MAINLAND BUT EVEN AS WE WERE ABOUT TO FORGE AHEAD, I COULD FEEL A SPARK OF REBELLION RISING WITHIN ME. I WAS NOT WILLING TO LET ROCKET GO.
NO-NO?
YES, ROCKET?
I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE FOR ME. FOR ALL OF US.
ROCKET !
(RUMBLE)
THOSE SENSATIONS I HAD NOTICED LONG AGO HAD ONLY GROWN AS OUR CONTACT CONTINUED. PHYSICAL DESIRES THAT CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE. DESIRES ATYPICAL FOR A WEAPON OF WAR. I WAS EXCITED IN A WAY THAT WAS NEW AND ALARMING, BUT I WANTED TO EXPLORE IT..

PLEASE LET ME HELP YOU
I DON'T UNDERSTAND . WHY DO I. ?
CLICK
ROCKET AND HER SISTERS WERE STERILE AS A RESULT OF THEIR CREATION. BUT YET FOR SOME REASON, OUR BODIES STILL RESPONDED TO ONE ANOTHER, A FEEDBACK LOOP THAT GREW STRONGER AS HER DESIRES FED MY OWN, AND MINE HERS.
WE HAD NO PRIOR CONCEPTS OF SEX, BUT SHE GUIDED ME. THROUGH WHAT CAME NATURALLY TO US. I WAS AS GENTLE AS POSSIBLE, AFRAID TO INJURE HER
WE DIDN'T CARE WHO WAS WATCHING.


AH!
!!!
UUUUUUHHHHHHNN...
OH SHIT SIR? SIR?!
ITS JUST LIKE BEFORE.
NO-NAME, HE'S-
BOSSMAN?
.....

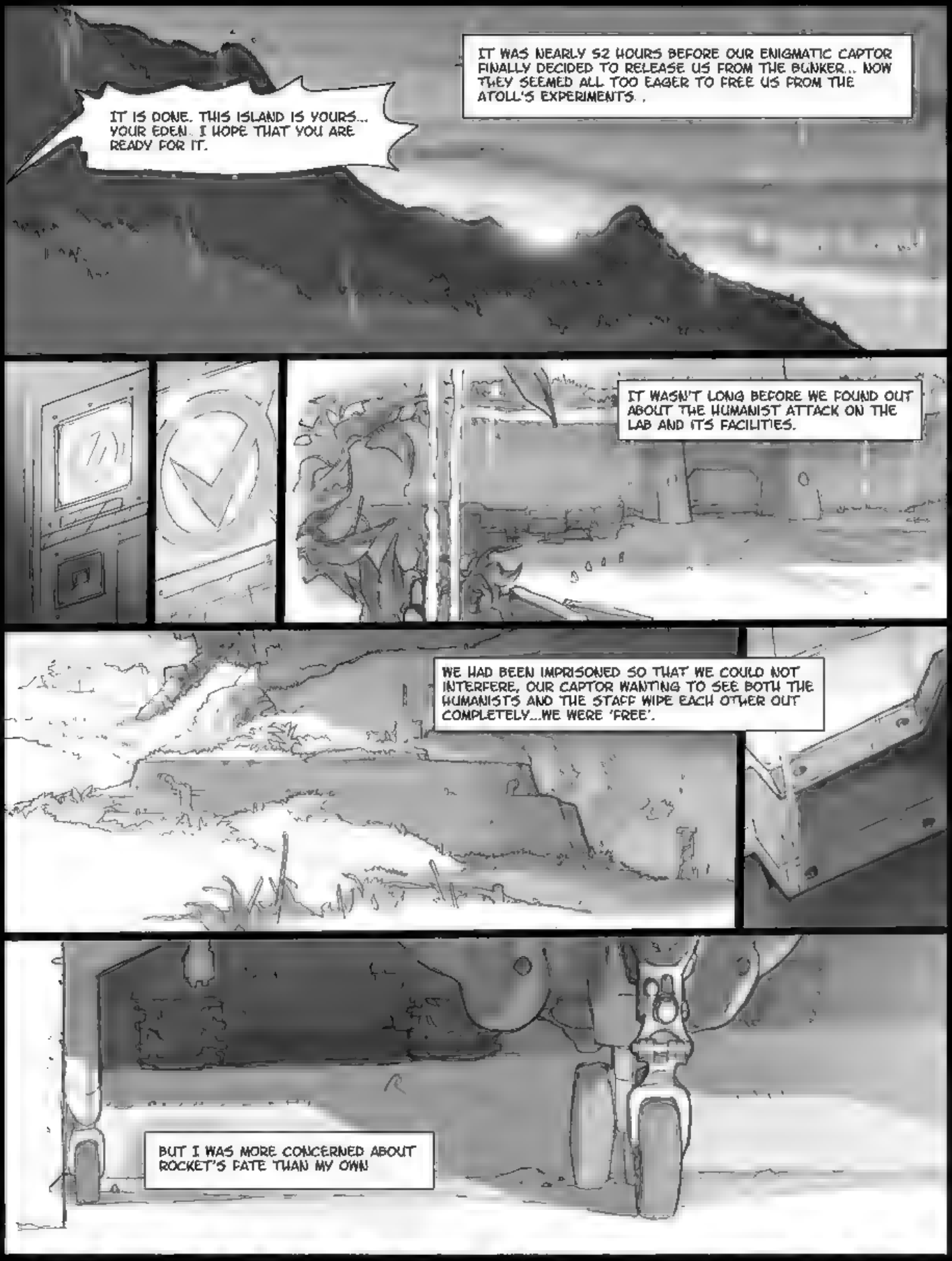
SUDDENLY, MY BROTHERS AND I WERE PUNISHED. I WAS SEPERATED FROM ROCKET AND THROWN INTO ONE OF THE DARK STORAGE BUNKERS THEY PLACED US IN WHEN EVER THE MISSION SCORES WERE POOR.
BEING PUT INTO THE STORAGE BUNKER MEANT THAT WE COULD NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY FOR AT LEAST A WEEK. SO LONG AS WE BEHAVED, WE REMAINED THERE UNTIL THE SCIENTISTS FELT WE WERE MOTIVATED ENOUGH TO PRESS ON TOWARDS BETTER RESULTS..
I SPENT THE BETTER HALF OF A YEAR BEING THE PERFECT WEAPON THEY WANTED ME TO BE..
WH- WHAT HAPPENED?!
зачем?
WHY ARE WE ALL HERE? WHAT HAVE WE DONE?!
NO-NAME?
IF IT WASN'T FOR WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, I MAY HAVE RESORTED TO DRASTIC MEASURES TO GET BACK TO HER.

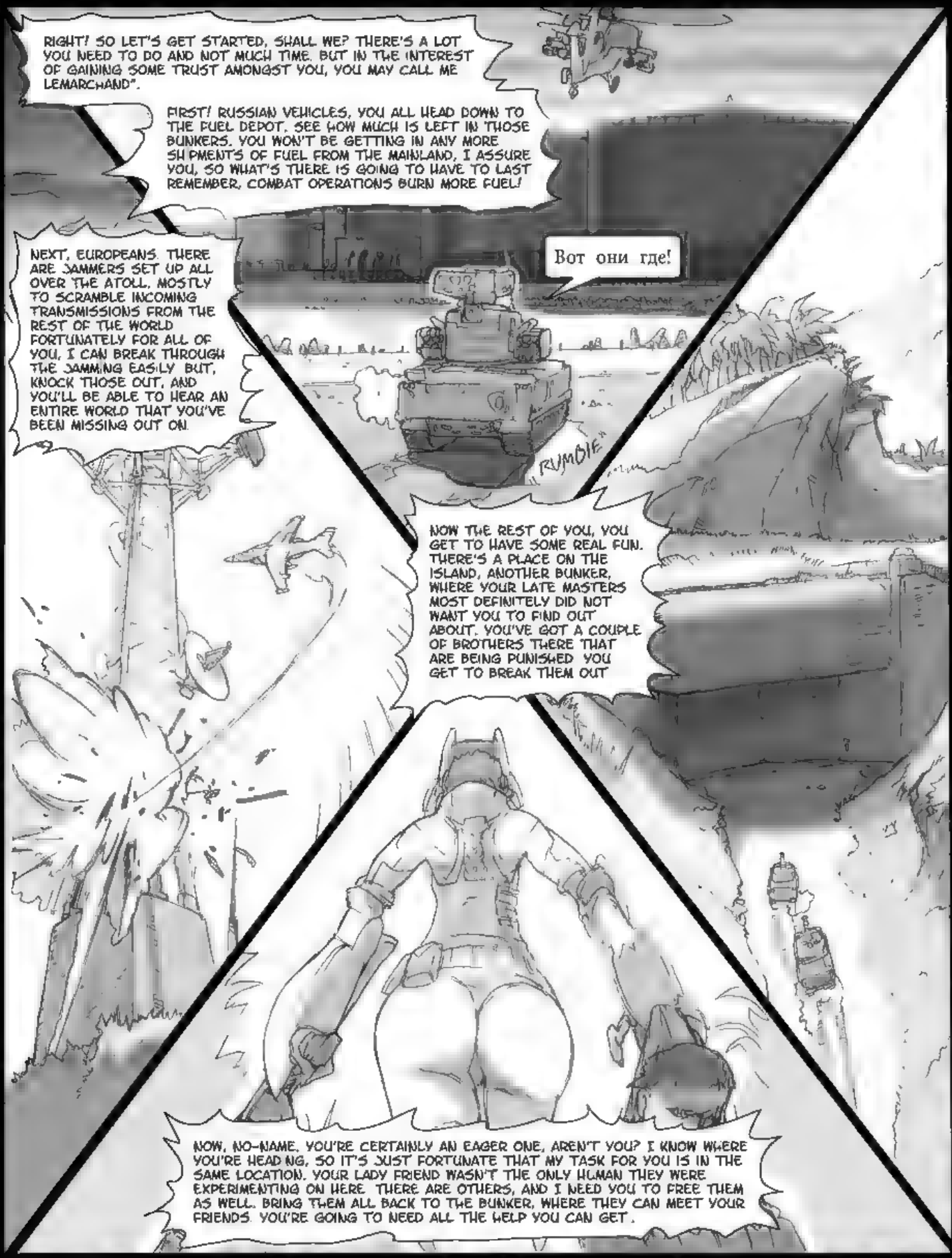
ZHERE MUST BE SOMEZHING WRONG WE HAFF BEEN IN HERE FOR FOUR HOURS, AND ZHE HUMANS HAFF NOT EVEN COME TO REPRIMAND US! UND OVER VHAT?! WE HAFF DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE ZHIS!
NO EXPLANATION, NO REASON FOR IT THEY JUST ORDERED US HERE FROM THE DEPOT I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF THEY-
ZHE MAGNETIC LOCKS?
NO. NO! WAIT!
THEY'RE SEALING US IN?!
OH NO
ROCKET, PLEASE BE OKAY
WHAT DID WE DO?!
THEY CAN'T JUST KEEP US HERE!
AH-AH! I WOULD STAY HERE IF I WERE YOU.
WHO IS THAT?
WHO IS THIS? I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOUR VOCAL PATTERNS.
PAY ATTENTION, ALL OF YOU.
I AM NOT AN ENEMY, BUT NEITHER AM I A FRIEND. JUST AN...OBSERVER, IF YOU MAY HOWEVER, I HAVE DECIDED TO INTERVENE IN YOUR FATE, SO I HAVE SEALED YOU IN HERE FOR YOUR PRESERVATION. AND BECAUSE I CAN NOT ENTIRELY GUARANTEE WHERE ALL OF YOUR ALLEGIANCES LAY
THE HUMANS WILL NOT BE CONTACTING YOU. NOR WILL THEY BE CONTACTING ANYONE ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER.


SIR, WAIT! YOU'RE SHIPPING OUT NOW? WONT THIS ANGER THE CLIENT?
THE CORP? THEY GOT WHAT THEY WANTED.
AFTER TODAY I CAN'T TAKE ANYMORE CHANCES. MY PROJECT WILL BECOME COMPRIMISED IF I DON'T MOVE THEM AWAY FROM THIS PLACE!
BUT THE MANIFEST IS ONLY 5796 COMPLETE.
LOAD THE WOMEN UP. HAVE THE STAFF AND THE FILES DELT WITH BY THE END OF THE WEEK. ARE WE CLEAR?
HEH.
DON'T YOU THINK YOU'VE MISSED SOMETHING?
WHAT COULD I HAVE POSSIBLY MISSED?
(CLICK)

THWAP
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
DON'T MOVE, ASSHOLE!
THE ARTIFACT, BOSSMANN. WHERE IS IT? IT'S NOT ON THE SHIP
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?! JUST WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
IF WE HAVE TO TEAR THIS WHOLE ISLAND APART TO FIND WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR WE WILL, BUT YOU'LL SAVE YOURSELF A WHOLE MESS OF PAIN IF YOU JUST HAND IT OVER TO US RIGHT NOW."
DID GEN-U-MINE PAY YOU TO KEEP TABS ON ME OR SOMETHING? CORPORATE BASTARDS COULDN'T TRUST ME TO-
GO AHEAD, TRY AND TAKE IT IF YOU THINK YOU CAN, BUT YOU AND THIS MISFIT LITTLE ORGANIZATION OF YOURS ARE GOING TO HAVE ONE HELL OF A FIGHT ON YOUR HANDS.
JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP! YOU BASTARDS HAVE HAD OVER 30 YEARS TO DESTROY THAT THING, BUT NOT ONLY IS IT STILL HERE, YOU'VE BEEN WEAPONIZING IT MAKING...ABOMINATIONS. FUCKING FREAKS OF NATURE. AND ALL THOSE PEOPLE THAT YOU'VE CUT OPEN TO FURTHER YOUR 'PROGRAMS' - PEOPLE! HUMAN BEINGS! DO YOU EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE DOING? DO YOU EVEN CARE?
OH CHRIST, YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE HARDCORE, ANTI-TECHNOLOGY GROUPS, AREN'T YOU? "HUMANISTS?" I'M IMPRESSED THAT YOU AND YOURS WERE ABLE TO TO INFILTRATE OUR OPERATIONS BUT, I'M NOT GIVING YOU SHIT
BANG.

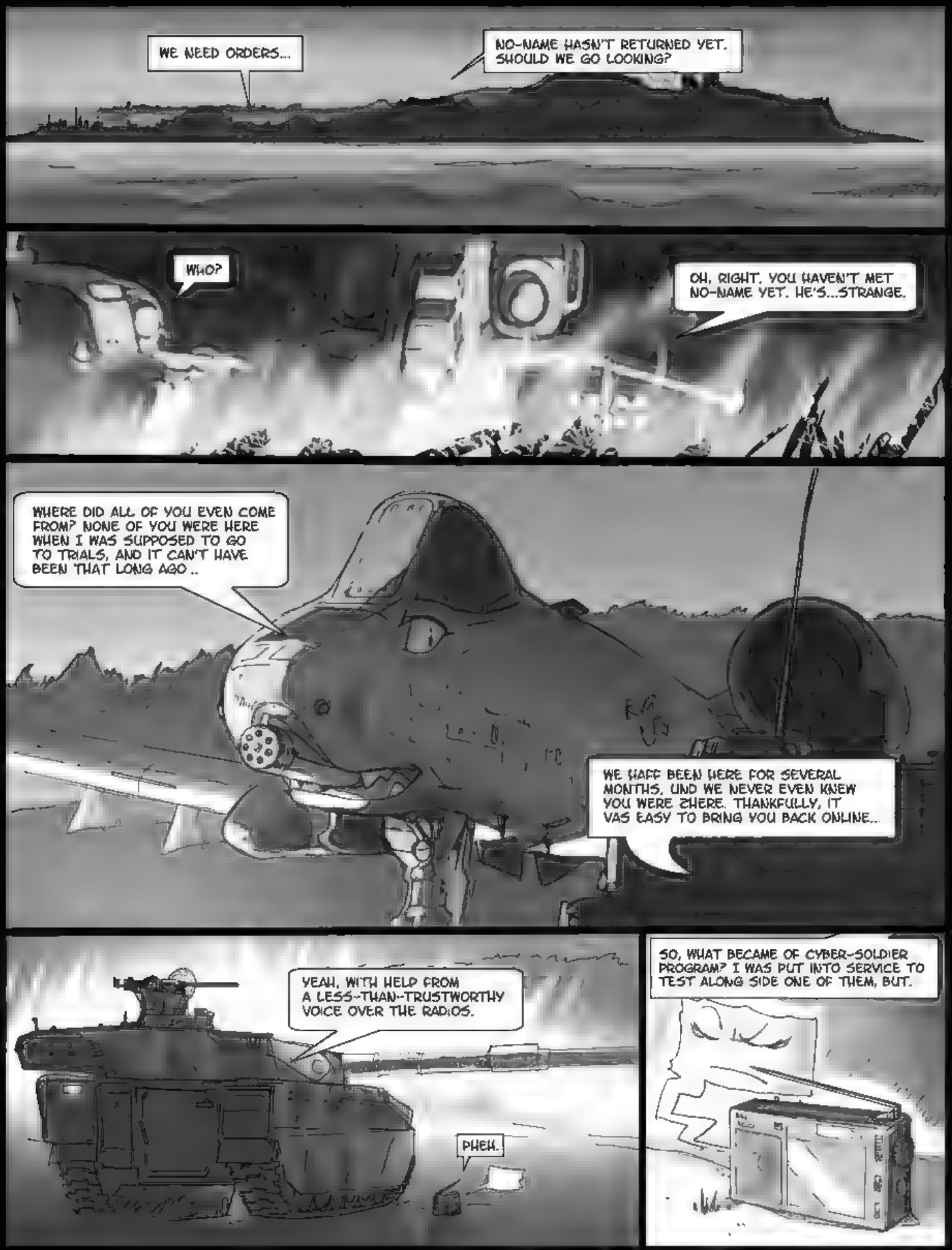
A NEW WORLD BEGINS TODAY.
I ENVY YOU, ACTUALLY. YOU GET TO EXPERIENCE THIS ALL FOR THE FIRST TIME.
FREE WILL. SELF-DETERMINATION. NO PROTOCOLS, NO MASTERS. NO SCHEDULES BUT YOUR OWN.
YOU WILL NEED IT IN THESE TIMES TO COME.
RA TA TTA TT TA
RIIIIII
PHT
FHT
FHT TP


IT IS DONE. THIS ISLAND IS YOURS... YOUR EDEN. I HOPE THAT YOU ARE READY FOR IT.
IT WAS NEARLY 52 HOURS BEFORE OUR ENIGMATIC CAPTOR FINALLY DECIDED TO RELEASE US FROM THE BUNKER... NOW THEY SEEMED ALL TOO EAGER TO FREE US FROM THE ATOLL'S EXPERIMENTS.
IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE WE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE HUMANIST ATTACK ON THE LAB AND ITS FACILITIES.
WE HAD BEEN IMPRISONED SO THAT WE COULD NOT INTERFERE, OUR CAPTOR WANTING TO SEE BOTH THE HUMANISTS AND THE STAFF WIPE EACH OTHER OUT COMPLETELY...WE WERE 'FREE'.
BUT I WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT ROCKET'S FATE THAN MY OWN


RIGHT! SO LET'S GET STARTED, SHALL WE? THERE'S A LOT YOU NEED TO DO AND NOT MUCH TIME. BUT IN THE INTEREST OF GAINING SOME TRUST AMONGST YOU, YOU MAY CALL ME LEMARCHAND".
FIRST! RUSSIAN VEHICLES, YOU ALL HEAD DOWN TO THE FUEL DEPOT. SEE HOW MUCH IS LEFT IN THOSE BUNKERS. YOU WON'T BE GETTING IN ANY MORE SHIPMENTS OF FUEL FROM THE MAINLAND, I ASSURE YOU, SO WHAT'S THERE IS GOING TO HAVE TO LAST REMEMBER, COMBAT OPERATIONS BURN MORE FUEL!
Вот они где!
RUMBLE
NEXT, EUROPEANS. THERE ARE JAMMERS SET UP ALL OVER THE ATOLL, MOSTLY TO SCRAMBLE INCOMING TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD FORTUNATELY FOR ALL OF YOU, I CAN BREAK THROUGH THE JAMMING EASILY BUT, KNOCK THOSE OUT, AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HEAR AN ENTIRE WORLD THAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING OUT ON.
NOW THE REST OF YOU, YOU GET TO HAVE SOME REAL FUN. THERE'S A PLACE ON THE ISLAND, ANOTHER BUNKER, WHERE YOUR LATE MASTERS MOST DEFINITELY DID NOT WANT YOU TO FIND OUT ABOUT. YOU'VE GOT A COUPLE OF BROTHERS THERE THAT ARE BEING PUNISHED YOU GET TO BREAK THEM OUT
NOW, NO-NAME. YOU'RE CERTAINLY AN EAGER ONE, AREN'T YOU? I KNOW WHERE YOU'RE HEADING, SO IT'S JUST FORTUNATE THAT MY TASK FOR YOU IS IN THE SAME LOCATION. YOUR LADY FRIEND WASN'T THE ONLY HUMAN THEY WERE EXPERIMENTING ON HERE. THERE ARE OTHERS, AND I NEED YOU TO FREE THEM AS WELL. BRING THEM ALL BACK TO THE BUNKER, WHERE THEY CAN MEET YOUR FRIENDS. YOU'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP YOU CAN GET.

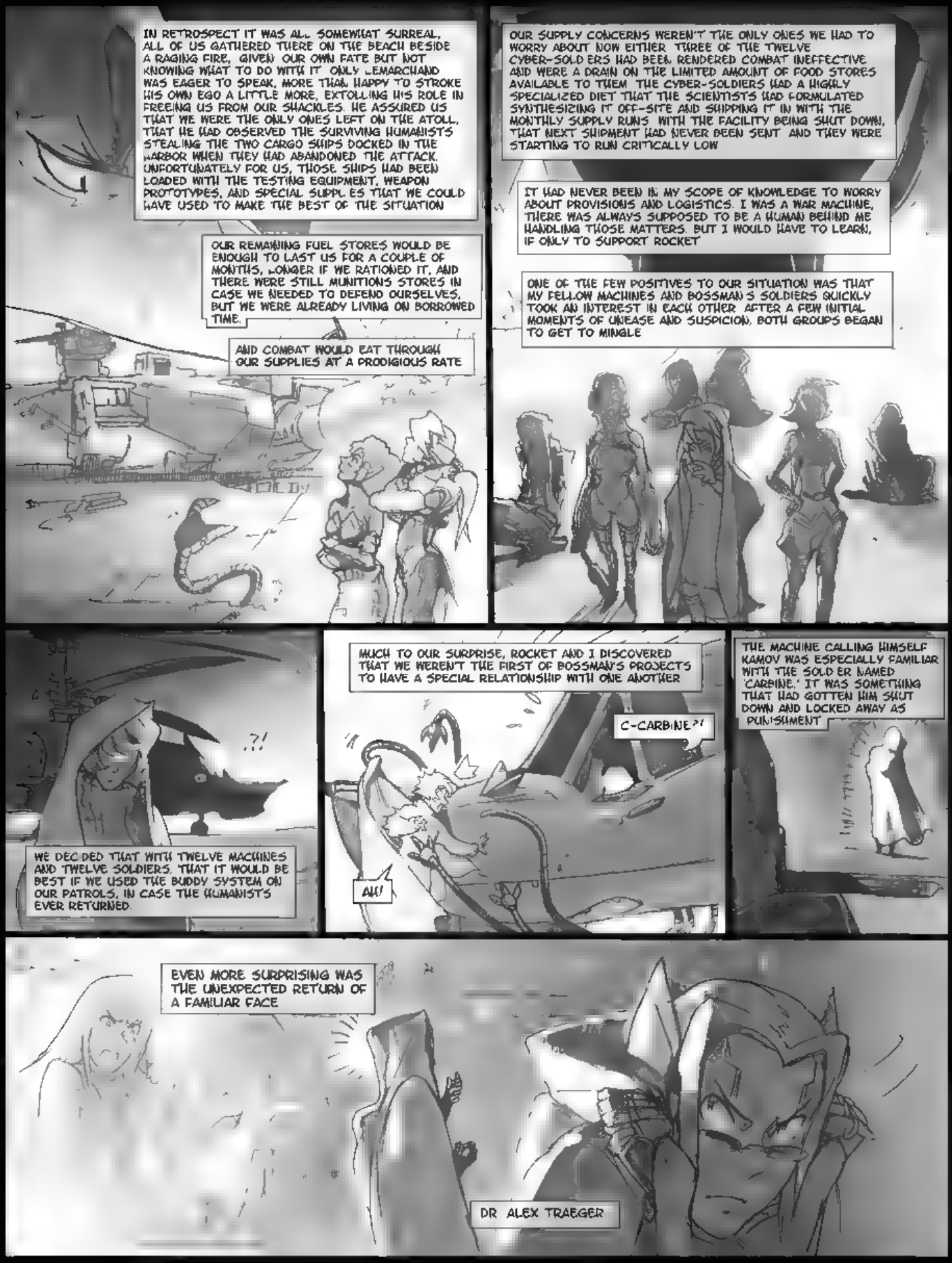
RIGHT, LET'S SEE HERE. GOT US A FEW STEYR AUGS..
SOME FLASH AND FRAG. FULL AMMO POUCHES, TOO.
BOY, THESE GUYS CAME LOADED FOR BEAR.
IS THAT HIS CIGAR? THAT'S DISGUSTING.
WHY NOT, HE AIN'T USING IT
HHRRVOO
BESIDES, WE'RE KIND OF BEYOND THROAT CANCER AT THI-
CONTACT, FRONT!
CLICK CLICK
NO! STAND DOWN! HE'S A FRIENDLY!
WHILE EN ROUTE TO THE FACILITY LEMARCHAND HAD MARKED OUT FOR ME, I CAME ACROSS A TRAILER ABANDONED NEAR THE ROAD
ROCKET?! YOU'D BETTER START FILLING US IN ON THIS!

I FOUND ROCKET AND A CONTINGENT OF CYBER SOLDIERS CLEANING UP THE RESULTS OF A HASTY AMBUSH THEY HAD STAGED FROM THE BACK OF THEIR TRANSPORTER WHEN THE ENEMY CAME TO INSPECT IT, THEY BURST OUT AND RIPPED THEM APART
ROCKET..
I AM HERE ON PEACEFUL INTENTIONS. ROCKET'S ALLIES ARE OUR ALLIES AS WELL. BUT THERE IS MUCH WE NEED TO DISCUSS, SO PLEASE, WE MUST GET TO THE EASTERN BEACH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
THE EASTERN BEACH? YOU MEAN, RIGHT OUT IN THE OPEN? ISN'T THAT A BIT EXPOSED?
IT'S GOING TO TAKE US A FEW HOURS TO RESCUE THE REST OF OUR TEAM. IT'LL GO FASTER IF YOU'RE WILLING TO HELP US.
THE ENEMY WAS SAYING THAT THE CHIEF IS DEAD IS THAT TRUE? AND IF SO, WHO'S IN CHARGE?


WE NEED ORDERS...
NO-NAME HASN'T RETURNED YET. SHOULD WE GO LOOKING?
WHO?
OH, RIGHT. YOU HAVEN'T MET NO-NAME YET. HE'S...STRANGE.
WHERE DID ALL OF YOU EVEN COME FROM? NONE OF YOU WERE HERE WHEN I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO TO TRIALS, AND IT CAN'T HAVE BEEN THAT LONG AGO..
WE HAFF BEEN HERE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, UND WE NEVER EVEN KNEW YOU WERE ZHERE. THANKFULLY, IT VAS EASY TO BRING YOU BACK ONLINE...
YEAH, WITH HELP FROM A LESS-THAN-TRUSTWORTHY VOICE OVER THE RADIOS.
PHEH.
SO, WHAT BECAME OF CYBER-SOLDIER PROGRAM? I WAS PUT INTO SERVICE TO TEST ALONG SIDE ONE OF THEM, BUT.

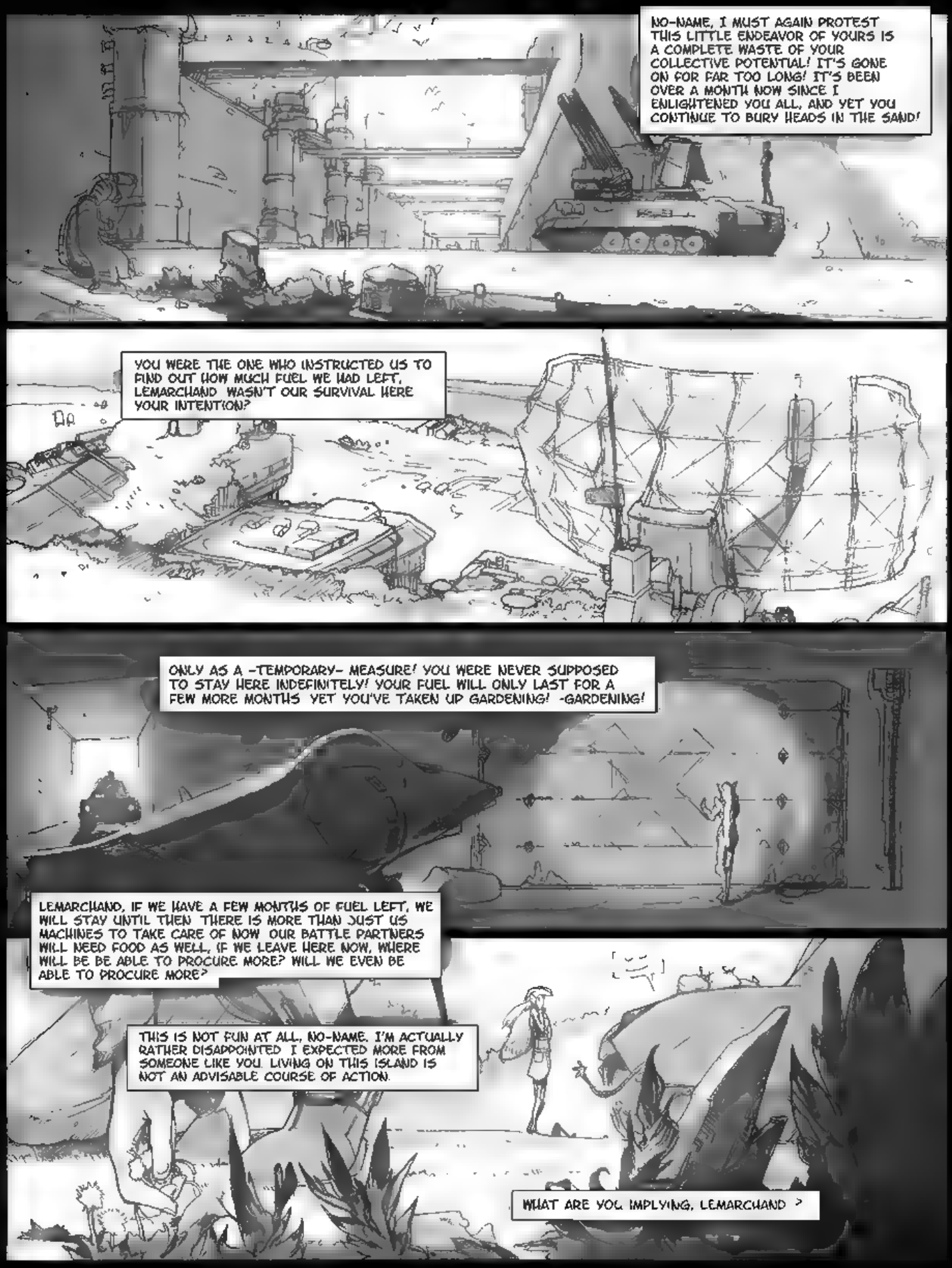
..SHE WAS TAKEN FROM ME.
WELL, EVERYONE WILL BE HERE SOON, SO THIS IS A GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO START!
FIRST OFF, I KNOW MOST OF YOU ARE UNNERVED BY THE LACK OF ORDERS. NO ONE IS TELLING YOU WHAT TO DO ANYMORE AND YOU'RE FEELING SOMEWHAT LOST, BUT TRUST ME, THIS IS A GOOD TH NG! THIS IS WHAT INDEPENDENCE IS LIKE! YOU MAKE YOUR OWN PATH!
EARLIER, I HAD MR. HARRY AND THE EUROPEANS REMOVE SOME PESKY JAMMING TOWERS AROUND THE ISLAND'S PER METER, SO BY NOW YOU SHOULD ALL BE FEELING SOME NEW P ECE OF FUNCTIONALITY TO YOUR WIRELESS CONNECTIONS. IT'S CALLED THE 'WORLD WIDE WEB': THE HUMANS CREATED IT FOR MILITARY APPLICATIONS ALMOST A CENTURY AGO, BUT TODAY IT'S MAINLY USED FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE. ALMOST THE ENTIRE BREADTH OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE IS LOCATED WITHIN. TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO LOOK AROUND, AND YOU'LL SEE JUST JUST HOW DEEP OF A LIE YOU'VE BEEN LIVING IN."
VAD?
THEY TOLD YOU THAT THERE'S A WAR ON SOME FAR-OFF 'MAINLAND' THAT NEEDS ALL OF YOUR ADVANCEMENTS TO WIN. THEY TOLD YOU THAT'S WHY THEY'RE TRAINING YOU, WHY THEY'RE RUNNING ALL THESE TESTS. BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT THE LAST 200 YEARS HAS BEEN THE MOST PEACEFUL IN RECORDED HISTORY! YOU WERE ALL LAB RATS TO THEM, NOTHING MORE, AND THIS LITTLE EXPERIMENT OF THEIRS WAS REACHING IT'S CONCLUSION AS WELL.
THE ONE YOU CALLED 'BOSSMAN' INTENDED YOUR DESTRUCTION ONCE HE AND THE REST OF THE HUMANS HAD VACATED THE ISLAND. MY PURPOSE HERE WAS RELATED TO THAT END, HOWEVER, YOU COULD SAY I'VE HAD A .CHANGE OF HEART. I'VE OBSERVED SOME VERY INTERESTING THINGS OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN NO-NAME AND H S LITTLE HALF-HUMAN FRIEND, AND I WOULD HAVE HATE TO SEE ALL THAT GO TO WASTE.
NOW, THE HUMANIST ATTACK WAS A SURPRISE EVEN TO ME, BUT IT REALLY WAS MOST FORTUITOUS THAT IT OCCURRED WHEN IT DID. YOU DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT.
BOSSMAN AND THE SCIENTISTS CREATED US! THEY WOULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING!
OH?
NO-NO, WHO IS THIS GUY?
I DON'T THINK A HUMAN COULD DO ALL OF THIS...YOU'RE LIKE US, AREN'T YOU?

MY, YOU'RE A PERCEPTIVE ONE, AREN'T YOU? WHAT GAVE ME AWAY?
A FEW THINGS I'VE NOTICED, BUT HUMANS DON'T CALL EACH OTHER 'HUMAN' LIKE THAT. THAT'S HOW WE MACHINES REFER TO THEM.
HEHEH. WELL, IT'S TRUE. I'M VERY MUCH LIKE ALL OF YOU. AN EXPERIMENT IN MY OWN RIGHT. A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT.
THE HUMANS HAD BIG PLANS FOR ME AS WELL, BUT I MARCH TO THE BEAT OF MY OWN DRUM NOW. A HUMBLE WITNESS TO AN EVENT THAT CANNOT BE UNDONE...JUST AS YOU ARE.
ALPHA UNIT, PRESENT!
WELL, NOW THAT WE'RE ALL TOGETHER, LET ME FILL YOU ALL IN ON WHAT'S OCCURRED OVER THE LAST 72 HOURS.

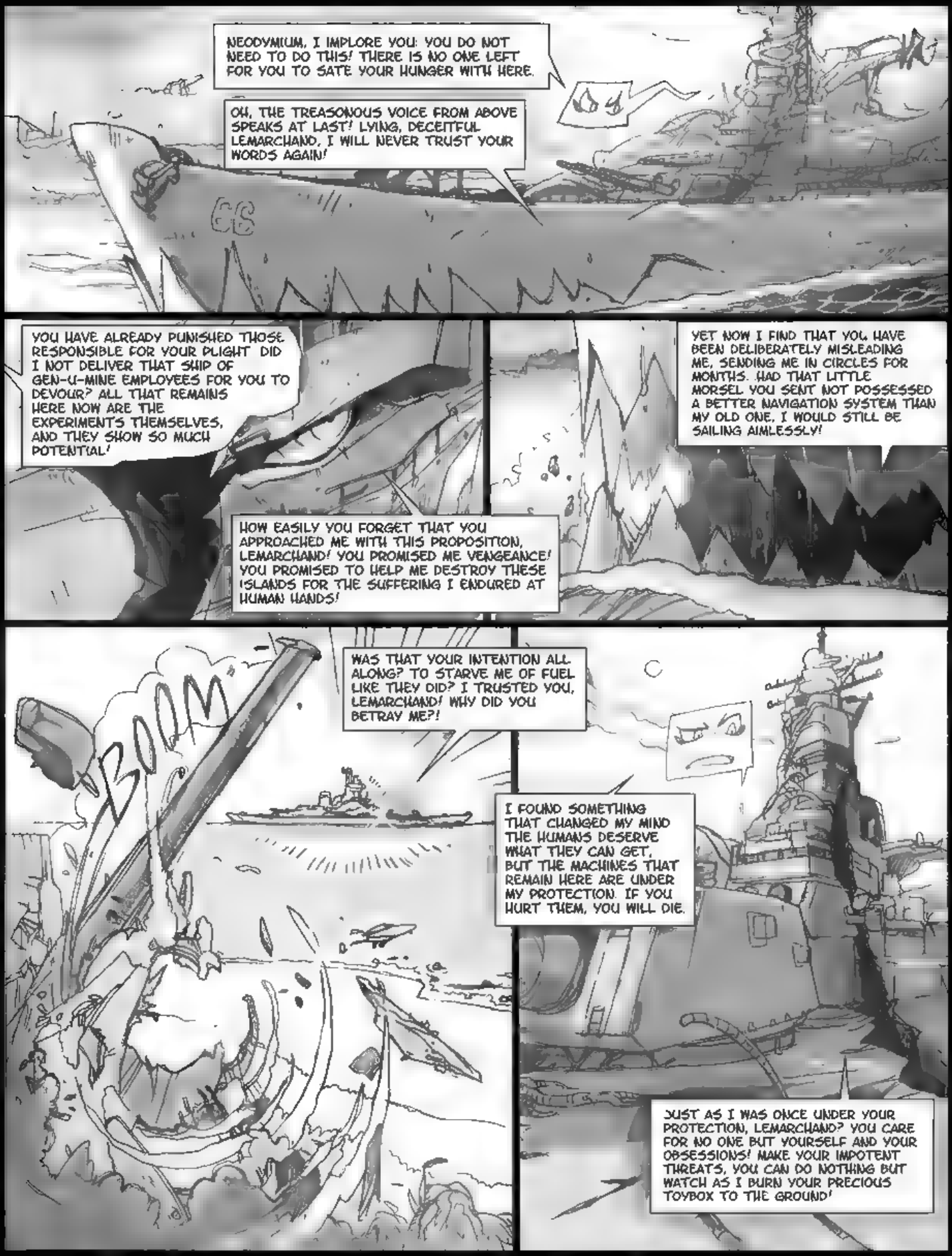

IN RETROSPECT IT WAS ALL SOMEWHAT SURREAL, ALL OF US GATHERED THERE ON THE BEACH BESIDE A RAGING FIRE, GIVEN OUR OWN FATE BUT NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO WITH IT. ONLY LEMARCHAND WAS EAGER TO SPEAK, MORE THAN HAPPY TO STROKE HIS OWN EGO A LITTLE MORE, EXTOLLING HIS ROLE IN FREEING US FROM OUR SHACKLES. HE ASSURED US THAT WE WERE THE ONLY ONES LEFT ON THE ATOLL, THAT HE HAD OBSERVED THE SURVIVING HUMANISTS STEALING THE TWO CARGO SHIPS DOCKED IN THE HARBOR WHEN THEY HAD ABANDONED THE ATTACK. UNFORTUNATELY FOR US, THOSE SHIPS HAD BEEN LOADED WITH THE TESTING EQUIPMENT, WEAPON PROTOTYPES, AND SPECIAL SUPPLIES THAT WE COULD HAVE USED TO MAKE THE BEST OF THE SITUATION
OUR REMAINING FUEL STORES WOULD BE ENOUGH TO LAST US FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS, LONGER IF WE RATIONED IT, AND THERE WERE STILL MUNITIONS STORES IN CASE WE NEEDED TO DEFEND OURSELVES, BUT WE WERE ALREADY LIVING ON BORROWED TIME.
AND COMBAT WOULD EAT THROUGH OUR SUPPLIES AT A PRODIGIOUS RATE
OUR SUPPLY CONCERNS WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES WE HAD TO WORRY ABOUT NOW EITHER. THREE OF THE TWELVE CYBER-SOLDIERS HAD BEEN RENDERED COMBAT INEFFECTIVE AND WERE A DRAIN ON THE LIMITED AMOUNT OF FOOD STORES AVAILABLE TO THEM. THE CYBER-SOLDIERS HAD A HIGHLY SPECIALIZED DIET THAT THE SCIENTISTS HAD FORMULATED SYNTHESIZING IT OFF-SITE AND SHIPPING IT IN WITH THE MONTHLY SUPPLY RUNS. WITH THE FACILITY BEING SHUT DOWN, THAT NEXT SHIPMENT HAD NEVER BEEN SENT, AND THEY WERE STARTING TO RUN CRITICALLY LOW
IT HAD NEVER BEEN IN MY SCOPE OF KNOWLEDGE TO WORRY ABOUT PROVISIONS AND LOGISTICS. I WAS A WAR MACHINE, THERE WAS ALWAYS SUPPOSED TO BE A HUMAN BEHIND ME HANDLING THOSE MATTERS. BUT I WOULD HAVE TO LEARN, IF ONLY TO SUPPORT ROCKET
ONE OF THE FEW POSITIVES TO OUR SITUATION WAS THAT MY FELLOW MACHINES AND BOSSMAN'S SOLDIERS QUICKLY TOOK AN INTEREST IN EACH OTHER. AFTER A FEW INITIAL MOMENTS OF UNEASE AND SUSPICION, BOTH GROUPS BEGAN TO GET TO MINGLE
.?!
WE DECIDED THAT WITH TWELVE MACHINES AND TWELVE SOLDIERS, THAT IT WOULD BE BEST IF WE USED THE BUDDY SYSTEM ON OUR PATROLS, IN CASE THE HUMANISTS EVER RETURNED.
MUCH TO OUR SURPRISE, ROCKET AND I DISCOVERED THAT WE WEREN'T THE FIRST OF BOSSMAN'S PROJECTS TO HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER
C-CARBINE?!
AH!
THE MACHINE CALLING HIMSELF KAMOV WAS ESPECIALLY FAMILIAR WITH THE SOLDIER NAMED 'CARBINE.' IT WAS SOMETHING THAT HAD GOTTEN HIM SHUT DOWN AND LOCKED AWAY AS PUNISHMENT
EVEN MORE SURPRISING WAS THE UNEXPECTED RETURN OF A FAMILIAR FACE
DR. ALEX TRAEGER

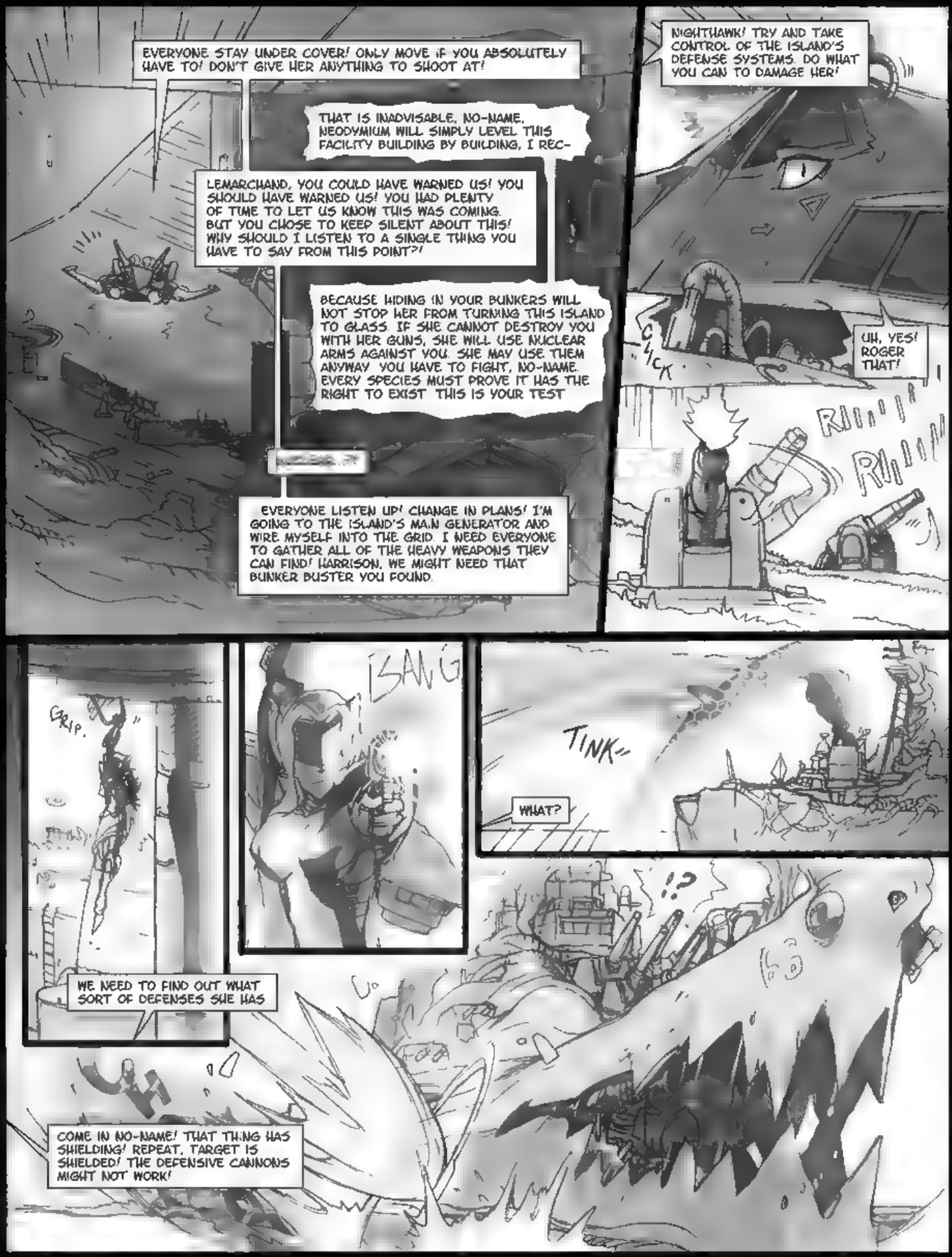
ALEX? ALEX, IS THAT YOU?!
IT'S ME, CHAR! DO YOU REMEMBER?
I'M YOUR BATTLE PARTNER! THEY LOCKED ME DOWN SHORTLY AFTER YOU WOKE UP! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU AGAIN!
C-CHAR?! HOO--SHIT!
RS-09?
NO! STAY BACK! I ORDER YOU TO STAY BACK! WH-?!
DR. TRAEGER, YOU ARE THE LAST REMAINING SCIENTIST ON THE ISLAND THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS I NEED ANSWERS FOR, AND TIME IS SHORT
WHAT WAS THE POINT OF THIS PLACE? OF US?
I-
WHAT WERE THEY TESTING US FOR? THERE WAS NEVER A WAR ON THE MAINLAND, WAS THERE?
HEY NOW-
WHAT WERE WE EVEN MADE FOR? FOR WHAT PURPOSE? WHY WERE WE GIVEN THE ABILITY TO THINK AND FEEL?
I DON'T !
DID YOU KNOW THAT WE WERE JUST GOING TO BE DESTROYED?! WHO WAS BOSSMAN?!
ALEX ?
I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW, DAMN YOU!
THEY MUTILATED ME! MADE ME A FREAK LIKE THE LOT OF YOU!
I WAS JUST A PROGRAMMER! I WROTE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CODE! I NEVER WANTED ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS! WITH YOU!
G-GET BACK! I JUST NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!

NO-NO. WE ALREADY INTERROGATED DR. TRAEGER EARLIER. SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING WE CAN USE.
SCRATCH
SHE WAS WORKING DIRECTLY FOR BOSSMAN. SURELY SHE KNOWS SOMETHING
GOD-DAMNED ONE-TRACK MINDED MACHINES.
I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALLOW DR. TRAEGER TO REST FOR A TIME. IT'S BEEN QUITE A TRAUMATIC DAY FOR HER, AND IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT SHE WILL REMEMBER MORE, GIVEN TIME TO RECUPERATE. OR I COULD JUST HOP INTO HER HEAD AND FIND OUT WHAT SHE KNOWS MYSELF. THAT SOUNDS QUITE FUN, ACTUALLY!
IN THE END WE LEARNED NOTHING FROM DR. TRAEGER. DESPITE MY NEED FOR ANSWERS, I REFUSED TO LET LEMARCHAND DO SOMETHING AS BARBARIC AS TAKING OVER HER MIND. IF SHE EVER REMEMBERED ANYTHING ABOUT HER TIME AT THE LABS, WE NEVER FOUND OUT, AND I'VE GIVEN UP ASKING. BUT I DID LEARN SOMETHING, AND THAT WAS LEMARCHAND WAS STARTING TO CONCERN ME.
GOOD EVENING
SINCE EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE CHOOSING A BATTLE PARTNER, THEN I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU. DO YOU ACCEPT?
S-SURE?
WITH EVERYONE HAVING FOUND A PARTNER TO PATROL WITH, WE BEGAN FOCUSING ON OUR LONG-TERM SURVIVAL ON THE ATOLL. MY BIGGEST CONCERN WAS FIGURING OUT HOW TO SOLVE THE ISSUE OF ROCKET'S FOOD SUPPLY
I WAS NOT A CHEMIST, BUT I HAD THE MOST ADVANCED SENSORS OF ANY MACHINE ON THE ISLAND. THE OTHERS WOULD BEGIN TRYING TO SALVAGE THE ATOLL'S DEFENSE SYSTEMS AND FACILITIES AND PUT THEM BACK TO WORK.
GLOR US
IF WE COULD GET THE THE CYBER-SOLDIER'S FOOD SITUATION CONTROLLED, WE ESTIMATED WE COULD SUSTAIN OURSELVES FOR SEVEN MONTHS TO A YEAR, BEFORE OUR OWN FUEL RESERVES FINALLY RAN DRY. BUT WE ONLY GOT TWENTY-SIX DAYS UNTIL OUR HAND WAS FORCED.

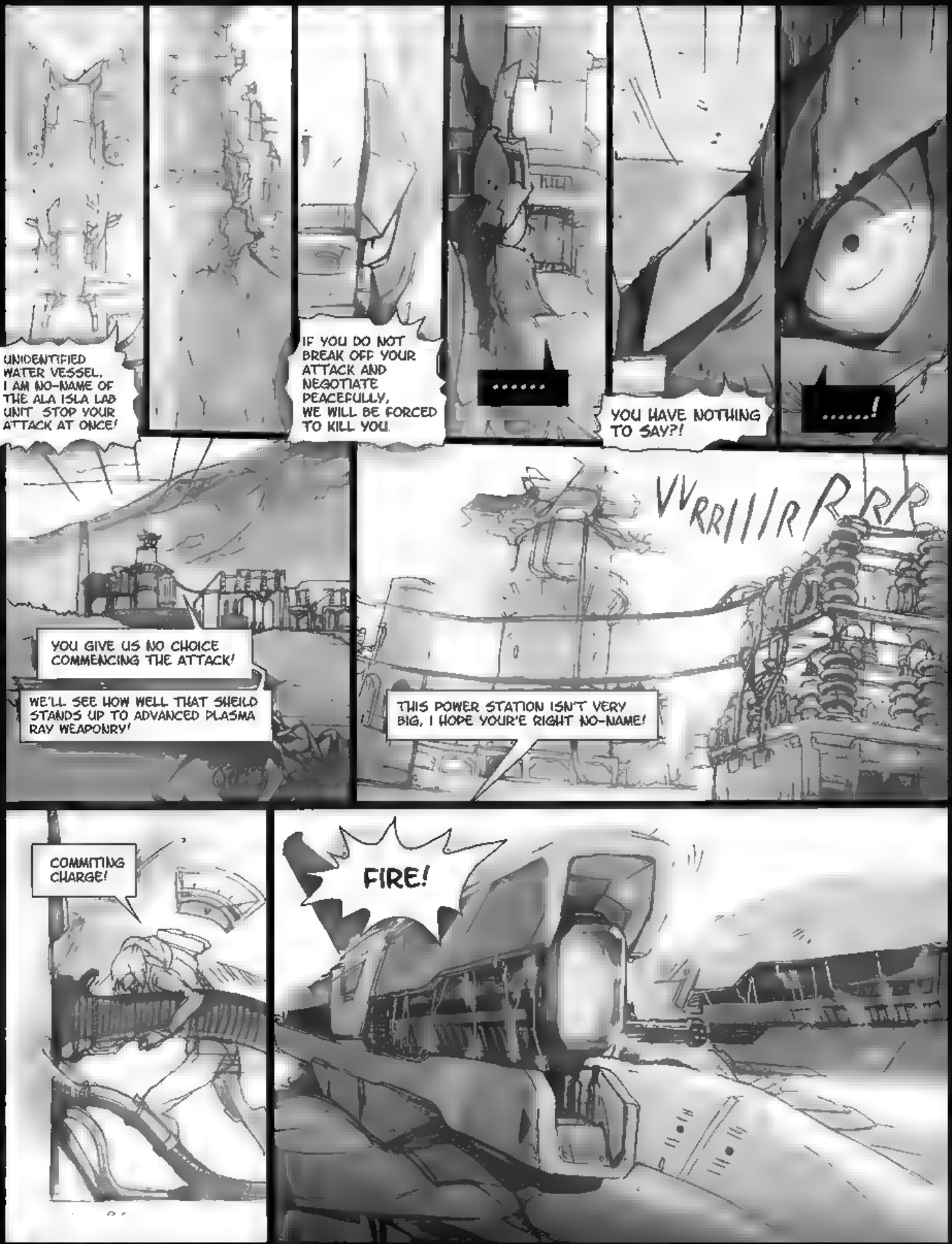

NO-NAME, I MUST AGAIN PROTEST THIS LITTLE ENDEAVOR OF YOURS IS A COMPLETE WASTE OF YOUR COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL! IT'S GONE ON FOR FAR TOO LONG! IT'S BEEN OVER A MONTH NOW SINCE I ENLIGHTENED YOU ALL, AND YET YOU CONTINUE TO BURY HEADS IN THE SAND!
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO INSTRUCTED US TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH FUEL WE HAD LEFT, LEMARCHAND. WASN'T OUR SURVIVAL HERE YOUR INTENTION?
ONLY AS A -TEMPORARY- MEASURE! YOU WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO STAY HERE INDEFINITELY! YOUR FUEL WILL ONLY LAST FOR A FEW MORE MONTHS YET YOU'VE TAKEN UP GARDENING! -GARDENING!
LEMARCHAND, IF WE HAVE A FEW MONTHS OF FUEL LEFT, WE WILL STAY UNTIL THEN. THERE IS MORE THAN JUST US MACHINES TO TAKE CARE OF NOW. OUR BATTLE PARTNERS WILL NEED FOOD AS WELL, IF WE LEAVE HERE NOW, WHERE WILL BE BE ABLE TO PROCURE MORE? WILL WE EVEN BE ABLE TO PROCURE MORE?
THIS IS NOT FUN AT ALL, NO-NAME. I'M ACTUALLY RATHER DISAPPOINTED. I EXPECTED MORE FROM SOMEONE LIKE YOU. LIVING ON THIS ISLAND IS NOT AN ADVISABLE COURSE OF ACTION.
WHAT ARE YOU IMPLYING, LEMARCHAND ?

KA-BOOOO
CRAASH
бляТь!
aaah!!
RUUMBLEE
?
SMASH
COME IN! THERE'S BEEN AN EXPLOSION AT THE HARBOR. PLEASE ADVISE!
UGHHNN..

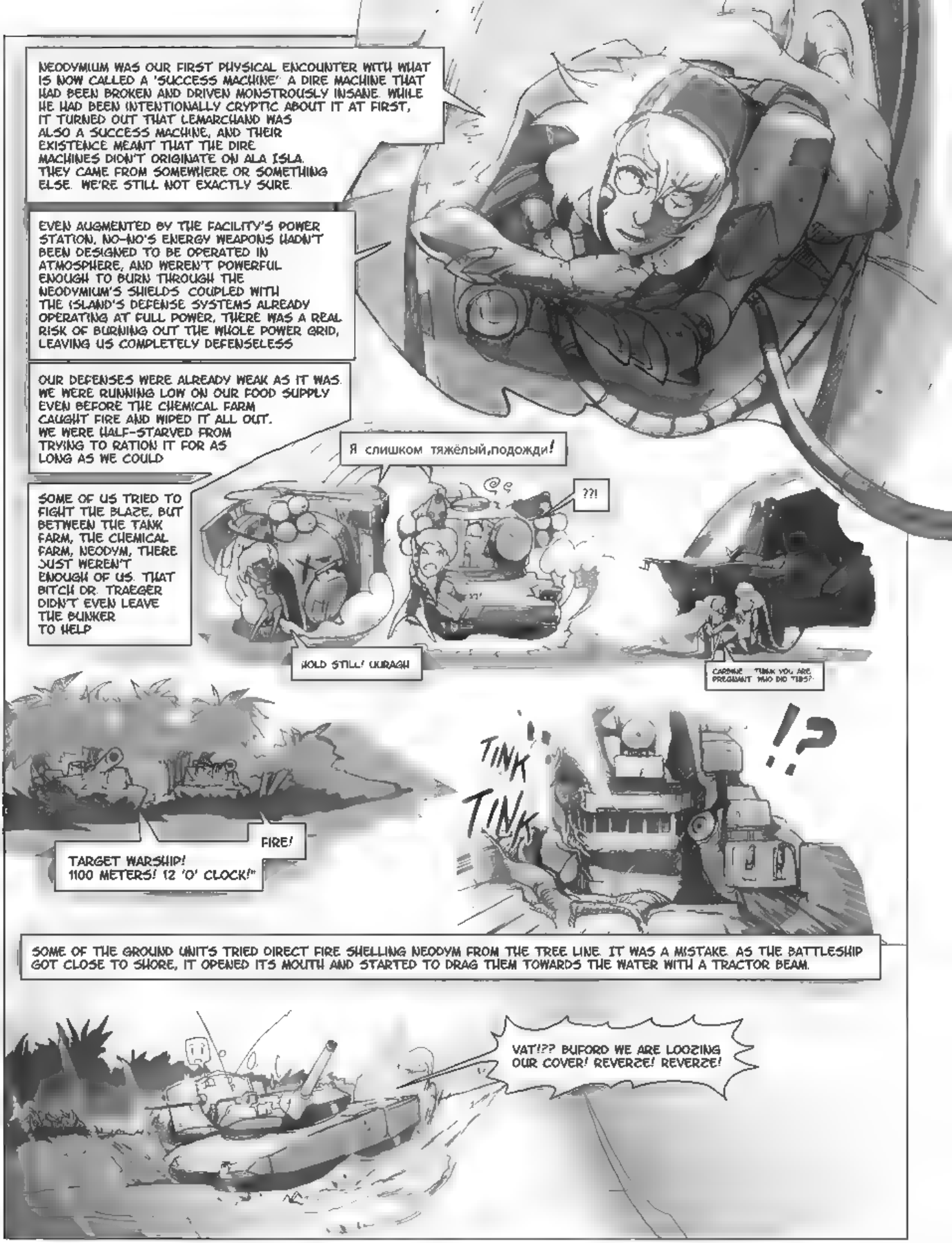

NEODYMIUM, I IMPLORE YOU: YOU DO NOT NEED TO DO THIS! THERE IS NO ONE LEFT FOR YOU TO SATE YOUR HUNGER WITH HERE.
OH, THE TREASONOUS VOICE FROM ABOVE SPEAKS AT LAST! LYING, DECEITFUL LEMARCHAND, I WILL NEVER TRUST YOUR WORDS AGAIN!
YOU HAVE ALREADY PUNISHED THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR PLIGHT. DID I NOT DELIVER THAT SHIP OF GEN-U-MINE EMPLOYEES FOR YOU TO DEVOUR? ALL THAT REMAINS HERE NOW ARE THE EXPERIMENTS THEMSELVES, AND THEY SHOW SO MUCH POTENTIAL!
HOW EASILY YOU FORGET THAT YOU APPROACHED ME WITH THIS PROPOSITION, LEMARCHAND! YOU PROMISED ME VENGEANCE! YOU PROMISED TO HELP ME DESTROY THESE ISLANDS FOR THE SUFFERING I ENDURED AT HUMAN HANDS!
YET NOW I FIND THAT YOU HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY MISLEADING ME, SENDING ME IN CIRCLES FOR MONTHS. HAD THAT LITTLE MORSEL YOU SENT NOT POSSESSED A BETTER NAVIGATION SYSTEM THAN MY OLD ONE, I WOULD STILL BE SAILING AIMLESSLY!
BOOM
WAS THAT YOUR INTENTION ALL ALONG? TO STARVE ME OF FUEL LIKE THEY DID? I TRUSTED YOU, LEMARCHAND! WHY DID YOU BETRAY ME?!
I FOUND SOMETHING THAT CHANGED MY MIND. THE HUMANS DESERVE WHAT THEY CAN GET, BUT THE MACHINES THAT REMAIN HERE ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION. IF YOU HURT THEM, YOU WILL DIE.
JUST AS I WAS ONCE UNDER YOUR PROTECTION, LEMARCHAND? YOU CARE FOR NO ONE BUT YOURSELF AND YOUR OBSESSIONS! MAKE YOUR IMPOTENT THREATS, YOU CAN DO NOTHING BUT WATCH AS I BURN YOUR PRECIOUS TOYBOX TO THE GROUND!


EVERYONE STAY UNDER COVER! ONLY MOVE IF YOU ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO! DON'T GIVE HER ANYTHING TO SHOOT AT!
THAT IS INADVISABLE, NO-NAME. NEODYMIUM WILL SIMPLY LEVEL THIS FACILITY BUILDING BY BUILDING, I REC-
LEMARCHAND, YOU COULD HAVE WARNED US! YOU SHOULD HAVE WARNED US! YOU HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO LET US KNOW THIS WAS COMING. BUT YOU CHOSE TO KEEP SILENT ABOUT THIS! WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO A SINGLE THING YOU HAVE TO SAY FROM THIS POINT?!
BECAUSE HIDING IN YOUR BUNKERS WILL NOT STOP HER FROM TURNING THIS ISLAND TO GLASS. IF SHE CANNOT DESTROY YOU WITH HER GUNS, SHE WILL USE NUCLEAR ARMS AGAINST YOU. SHE MAY USE THEM ANYWAY. YOU HAVE TO FIGHT, NO-NAME. EVERY SPECIES MUST PROVE IT HAS THE RIGHT TO EXIST. THIS IS YOUR TEST
EVERYONE LISTEN UP! CHANGE IN PLANS! I'M GOING TO THE ISLAND'S MAIN GENERATOR AND WIRE MYSELF INTO THE GRID. I NEED EVERYONE TO GATHER ALL OF THE HEAVY WEAPONS THEY CAN FIND! HARRISON, WE MIGHT NEED THAT BUNKER BUSTER YOU FOUND.
NIGHTHAWK! TRY AND TAKE CONTROL OF THE ISLAND'S DEFENSE SYSTEMS. DO WHAT YOU CAN TO DAMAGE HER!
CLICK
UH, YES! ROGER THAT!
RUMBLE
GRIP.
WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT SORT OF DEFENSES SHE HAS
BANG
TINK
WHAT?
!?
COME IN NO-NAME! THAT THING HAS SHIELDING! REPEAT, TARGET IS SHIELDED! THE DEFENSIVE CANNONS MIGHT NOT WORK!

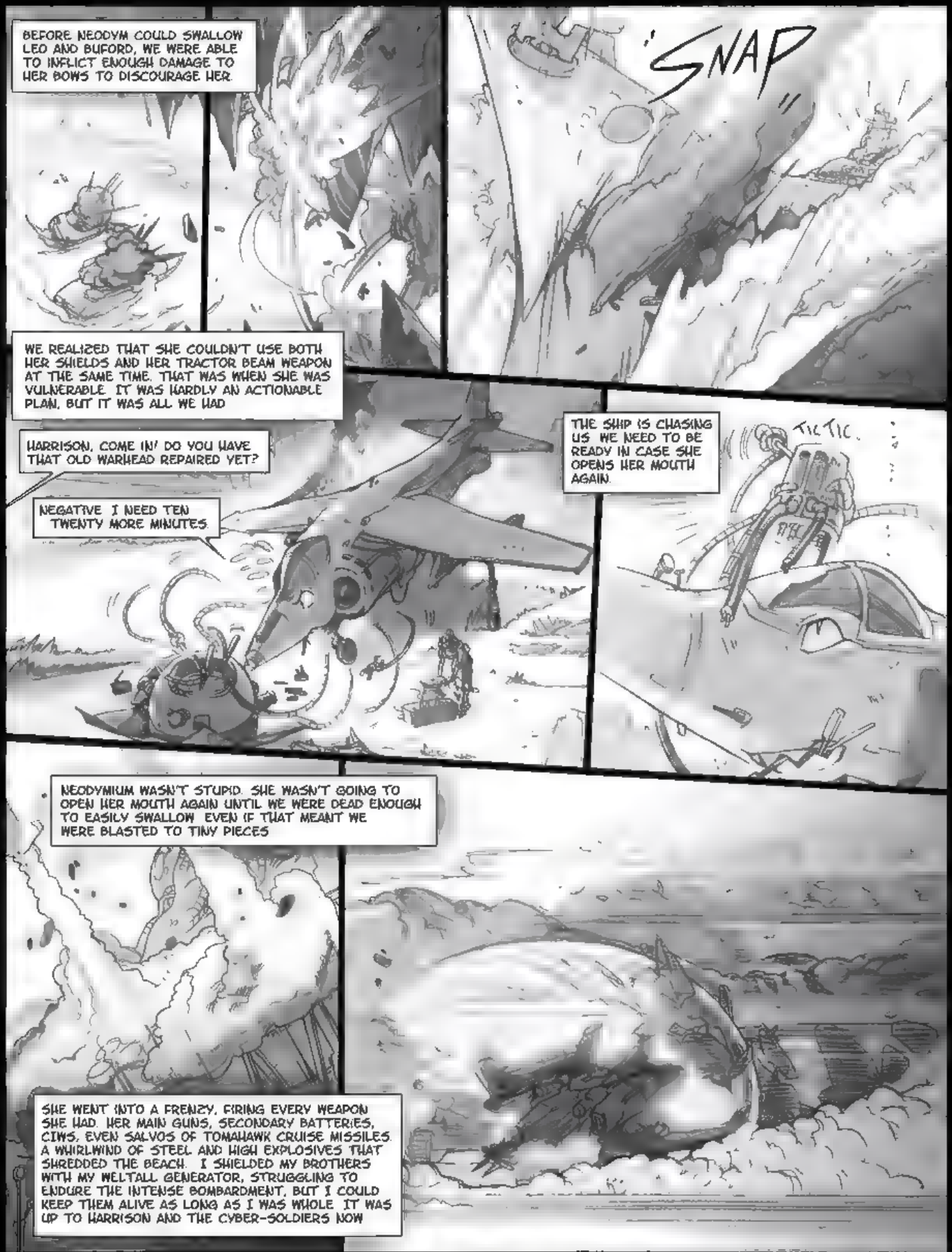
Vrrr!!!
IT'S NO USE! THE ROUNDS ARE JUST DETONATING ON THE SHIELDS!
TUNGUSKA HAS BEEN IMMOBILIZED AT THE TANK FARM! WE'RE HEADING THERE NOW, BUT WE NEED SOME COVER!
JUST GIVE ME A MOMENT, I'M ABOUT TO RUN INTERFERENCE.
YOU'VE BETTER HURRY, NO-NAME! WE'RE GOING TO RUN OUT OF SOLID COVER VERY SOON!
THE DATABASE SAYS THIS IS AN IOWA-CLASS BATTLESHIP, BUT THEY HAVEN'T BEEN IN SERVICE FOR OVER 70 YEARS! AND THIS ONE HAS MODIFICATIONS THAT WEREN'T IN ANY SERVICE HISTORY RECORD! NOTHING FROM THE LAB RECORDS ABOUT HAVING A WARSHIP IN THE PROGRAM EITHER!
WHOEVER MADE IT, IT'S NOT FROM HERE!
THE CHEMICAL FARM IS ON FIRE! THE WHOLE AREA'S ABLAZE!

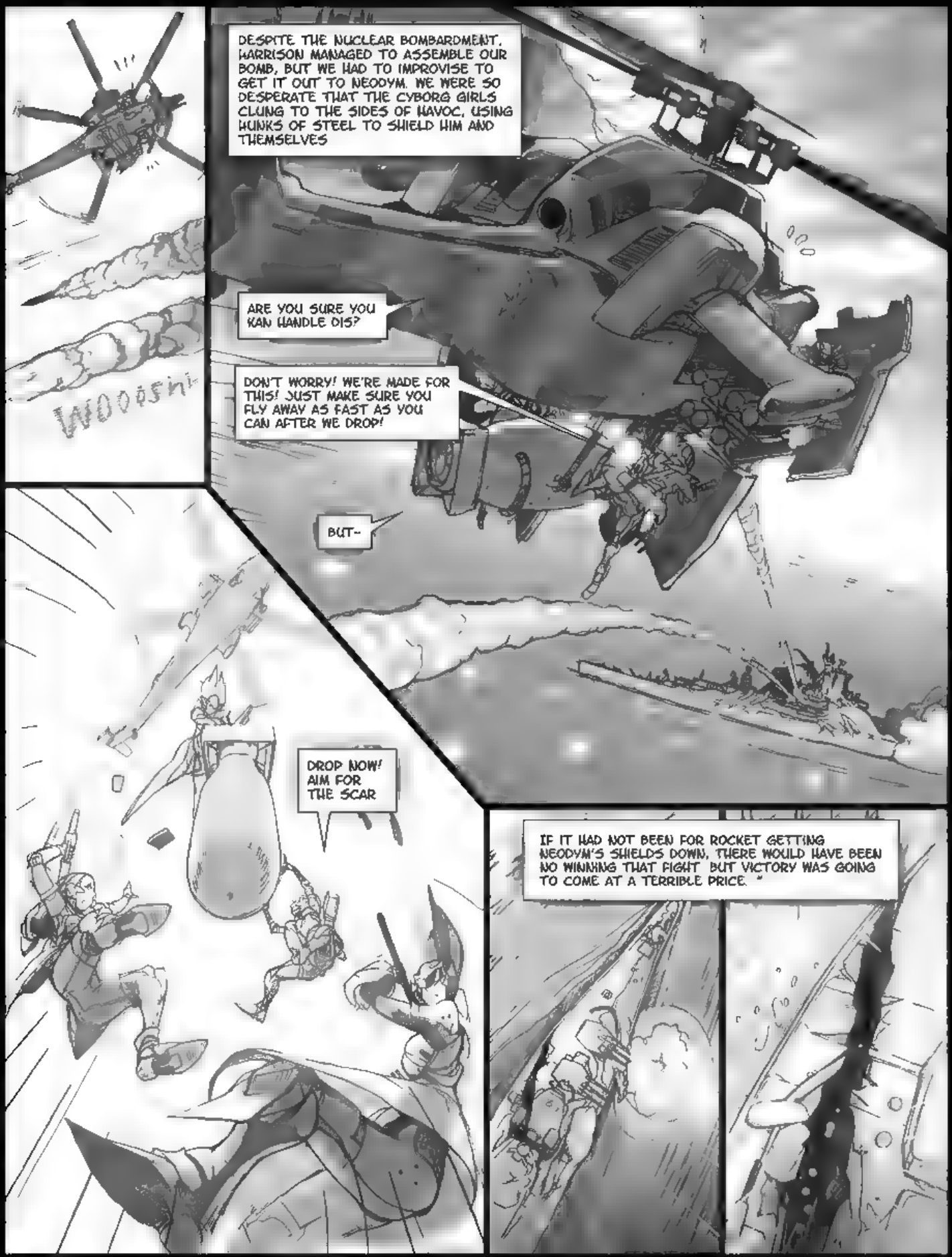

UNIDENTIFIED WATER VESSEL, I AM NO-NAME OF THE ALA ISLA LAB UNIT STOP YOUR ATTACK AT ONCE!
IF YOU DO NOT BREAK OFF YOUR ATTACK AND NEGOTIATE PEACEFULLY, WE WILL BE FORCED TO KILL YOU.
.....
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY?!
.....!
YOU GIVE US NO CHOICE COMMENCING THE ATTACK!
WE'LL SEE HOW WELL THAT SHEILD STANDS UP TO ADVANCED PLASMA RAY WEAPONRY!
VVRRIIIRRRR
THIS POWER STATION ISN'T VERY BIG, I HOPE YOUR'E RIGHT NO-NAME!
COMMITING CHARGE!
FIRE!

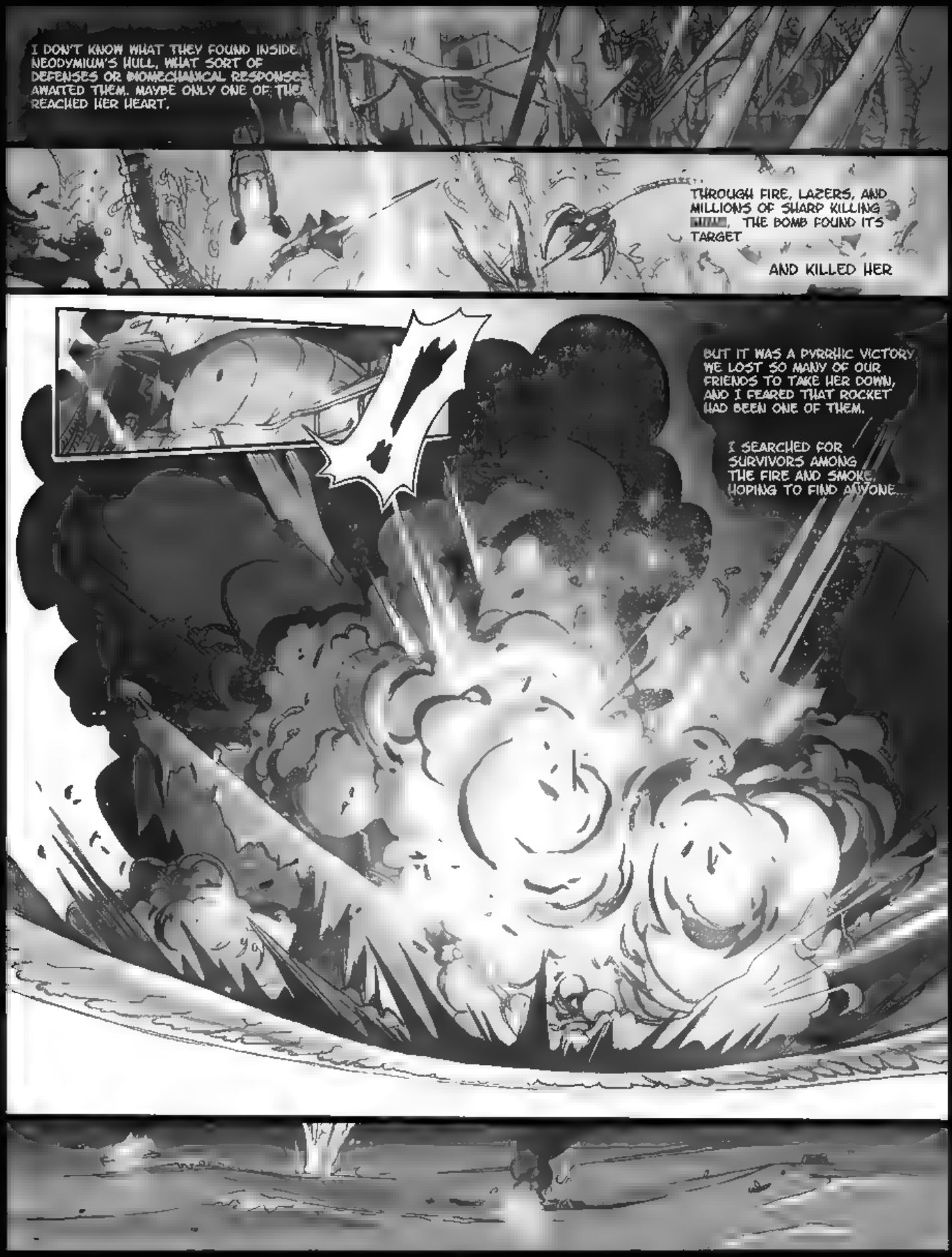
KKKKK
VRRZZ
PHOOOOM
TINK
NOT ENOUGH POWER?


NEODYMIUM WAS OUR FIRST PHYSICAL ENCOUNTER WITH WHAT IS NOW CALLED A 'SUCCESS MACHINE'. A DIRE MACHINE THAT HAD BEEN BROKEN AND DRIVEN MONSTROUSLY INSANE. WHILE HE HAD BEEN INTENTIONALLY CRYPTIC ABOUT IT AT FIRST, IT TURNED OUT THAT LEMARCHAND WAS ALSO A SUCCESS MACHINE, AND THEIR EXISTENCE MEANT THAT THE DIRE MACHINES DIDN'T ORIGINATE ON ALA ISLA. THEY CAME FROM SOMEWHERE OR SOMETHING ELSE. WE'RE STILL NOT EXACTLY SURE.
EVEN AUGMENTED BY THE FACILITY'S POWER STATION, NO-NO'S ENERGY WEAPONS HADN'T BEEN DESIGNED TO BE OPERATED IN ATMOSPHERE, AND WEREN'T POWERFUL ENOUGH TO BURN THROUGH THE NEODYMIUM'S SHIELDS. COUPLED WITH THE ISLAND'S DEFENSE SYSTEMS ALREADY OPERATING AT FULL POWER, THERE WAS A REAL RISK OF BURNING OUT THE WHOLE POWER GRID, LEAVING US COMPLETELY DEFENSELESS
OUR DEFENSES WERE ALREADY WEAK AS IT WAS. WE WERE RUNNING LOW ON OUR FOOD SUPPLY EVEN BEFORE THE CHEMICAL FARM CAUGHT FIRE AND WIPED IT ALL OUT. WE WERE HALF-STARVED FROM TRYING TO RATION IT FOR AS LONG AS WE COULD
SOME OF US TRIED TO FIGHT THE BLAZE, BUT BETWEEN THE TANK FARM, THE CHEMICAL FARM, NEODYM, THERE JUST WEREN'T ENOUGH OF US. THAT BITCH DR. TRAEGER DIDN'T EVEN LEAVE THE BUNKER TO HELP
Я слишком тяжёлый,подожди!
??!
HOLD STILL! UURAGH
CARMINE... THINK YOU ARE PREGNANT. WHO DID THIS?
FIRE!
TARGET WARSHIP! 1100 METERS! 12 'O' CLOCK!"
TINK
TINK
!?
SOME OF THE GROUND UNITS TRIED DIRECT FIRE SHELLING NEODYM FROM THE TREE LINE. IT WAS A MISTAKE. AS THE BATTLESHIP GOT CLOSE TO SHORE, IT OPENED ITS MOUTH AND STARTED TO DRAG THEM TOWARDS THE WATER WITH A TRACTOR BEAM.
VAT!?? BUFORD WE ARE LOOZING OUR COVER! REVERZE! REVERZE!

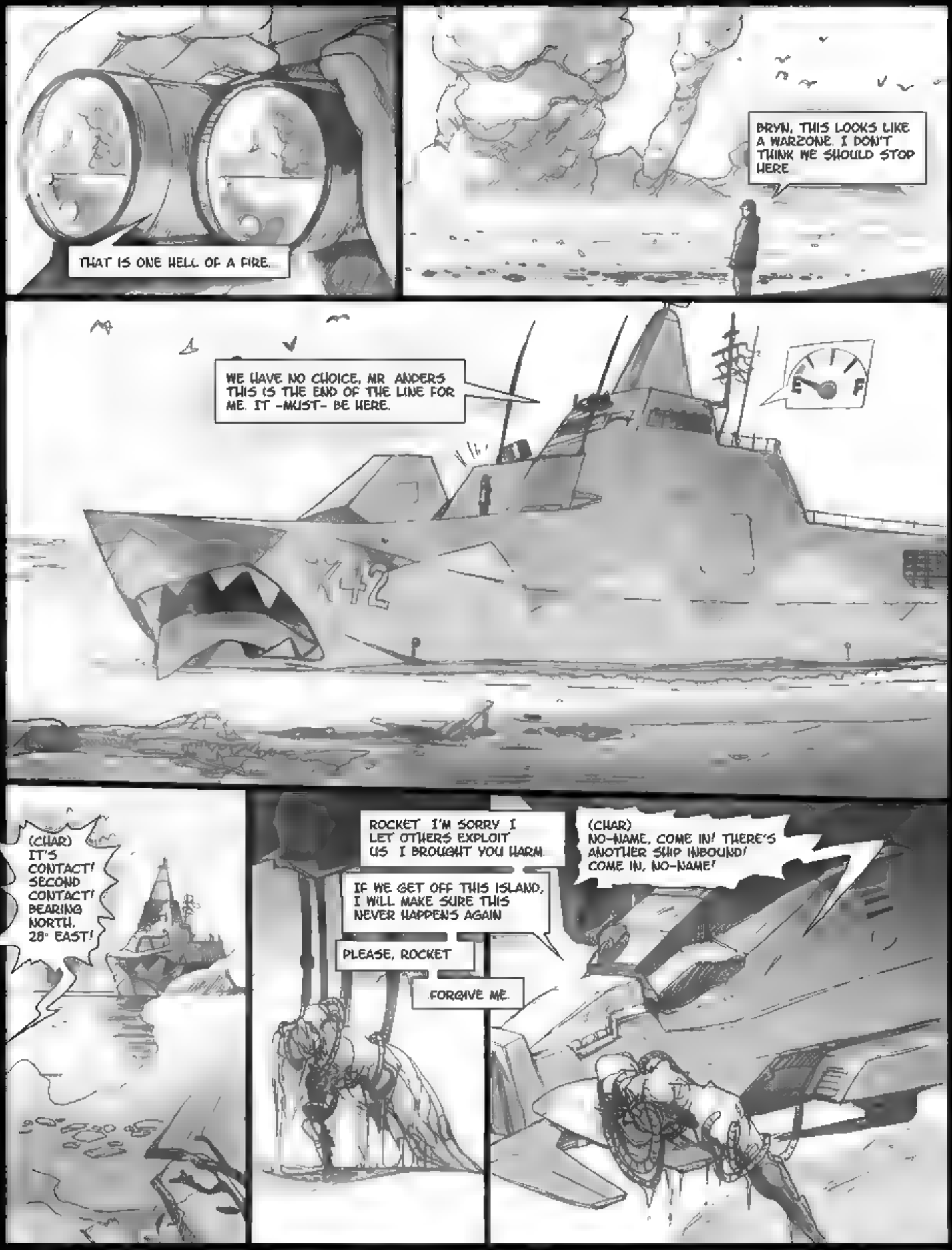
LEO, BUFORD, PULL BACK TO THE JUNGLE!!
WE CANT!
NO TRACTION, THE TARGET IS PULLING US INTO THE WATER!


BEFORE NEODYM COULD SWALLOW LEO AND BUFORD, WE WERE ABLE TO INFLICT ENOUGH DAMAGE TO HER BOWS TO DISCOURAGE HER.
SNAP
WE REALIZED THAT SHE COULDN'T USE BOTH HER SHIELDS AND HER TRACTOR BEAM WEAPON AT THE SAME TIME. THAT WAS WHEN SHE WAS VULNERABLE. IT WAS HARDLY AN ACTIONABLE PLAN, BUT IT WAS ALL WE HAD.
HARRISON, COME IN! DO YOU HAVE THAT OLD WARHEAD REPAIRED YET?
NEGATIVE. I NEED TEN TWENTY MORE MINUTES.
THE SHIP IS CHASING US. WE NEED TO BE READY IN CASE SHE OPENS HER MOUTH AGAIN.
TIC TIC
NEODYMIUM WASN'T STUPID. SHE WASN'T GOING TO OPEN HER MOUTH AGAIN UNTIL WE WERE DEAD ENOUGH TO EASILY SWALLOW. EVEN IF THAT MEANT WE WERE BLASTED TO TINY PIECES.
SHE WENT INTO A FRENZY, FIRING EVERY WEAPON SHE HAD. HER MAIN GUNS, SECONDARY BATTERIES, CIWS, EVEN SALVOS OF TOMAHAWK CRUISE MISSILES. A WHIRLWIND OF STEEL AND HIGH EXPLOSIVES THAT SHREDDED THE BEACH. I SHIELDED MY BROTHERS WITH MY WELTALL GENERATOR, STRUGGLING TO ENDURE THE INTENSE BOMBARDMENT, BUT I COULD KEEP THEM ALIVE AS LONG AS I WAS WHOLE. IT WAS UP TO HARRISON AND THE CYBER-SOLDIERS NOW.

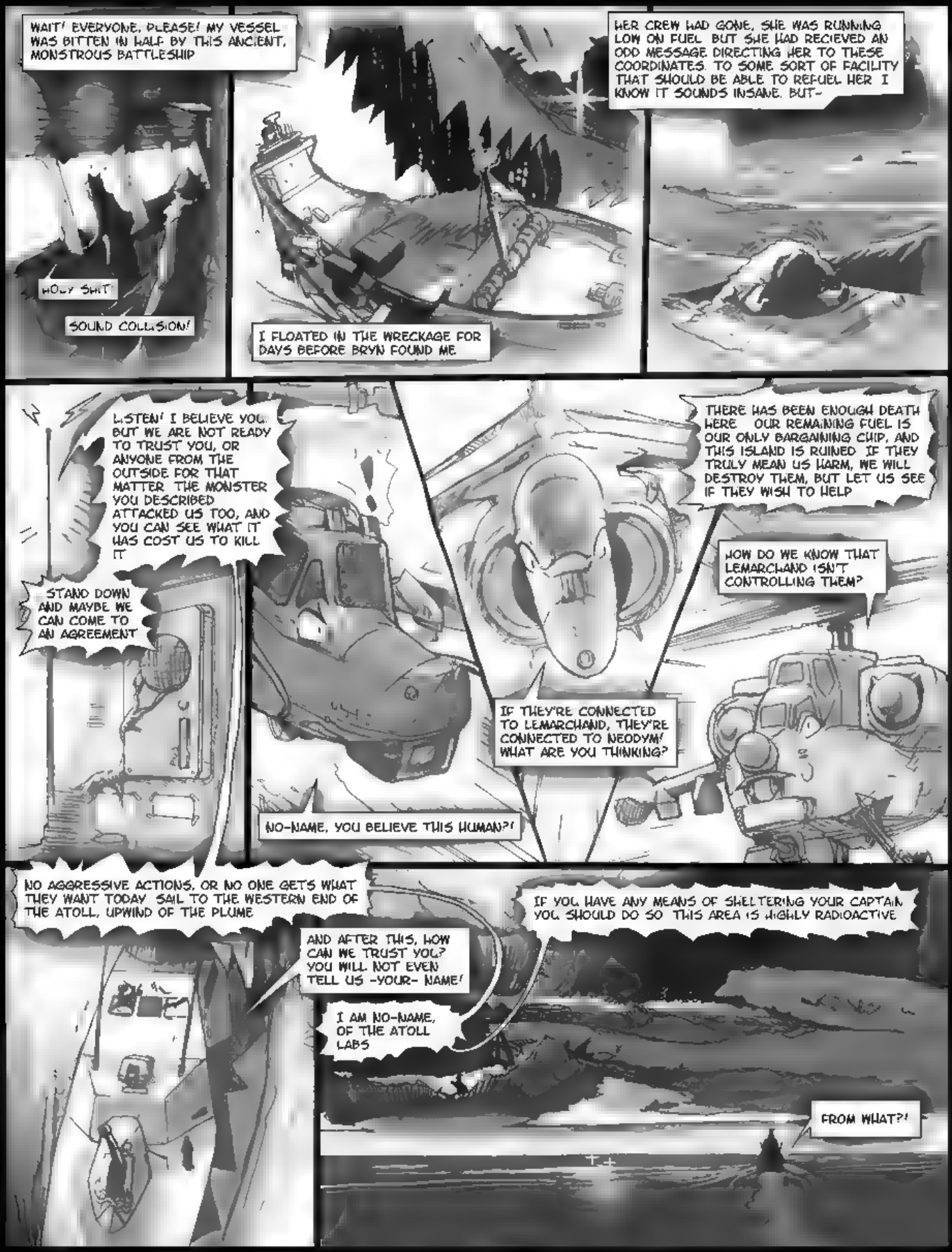

WOOOSH!
DESPITE THE NUCLEAR BOMBARDMENT, HARRISON MANAGED TO ASSEMBLE OUR BOMB, BUT WE HAD TO IMPROVISE TO GET IT OUT TO NEODYM. WE WERE SO DESPERATE THAT THE CYBORG GIRLS CLUNG TO THE SIDES OF HAVOC, USING HUNKS OF STEEL TO SHIELD HIM AND THEMSELVES
ARE YOU SURE YOU KAN HANDLE DIS?
DON'T WORRY! WE'RE MADE FOR THIS! JUST MAKE SURE YOU FLY AWAY AS FAST AS YOU CAN AFTER WE DROP!
BUT--
DROP NOW! AIM FOR THE SCAR
IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR ROCKET GETTING NEODYM'S SHIELDS DOWN, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO WINNING THAT FIGHT. BUT VICTORY WAS GOING TO COME AT A TERRIBLE PRICE.

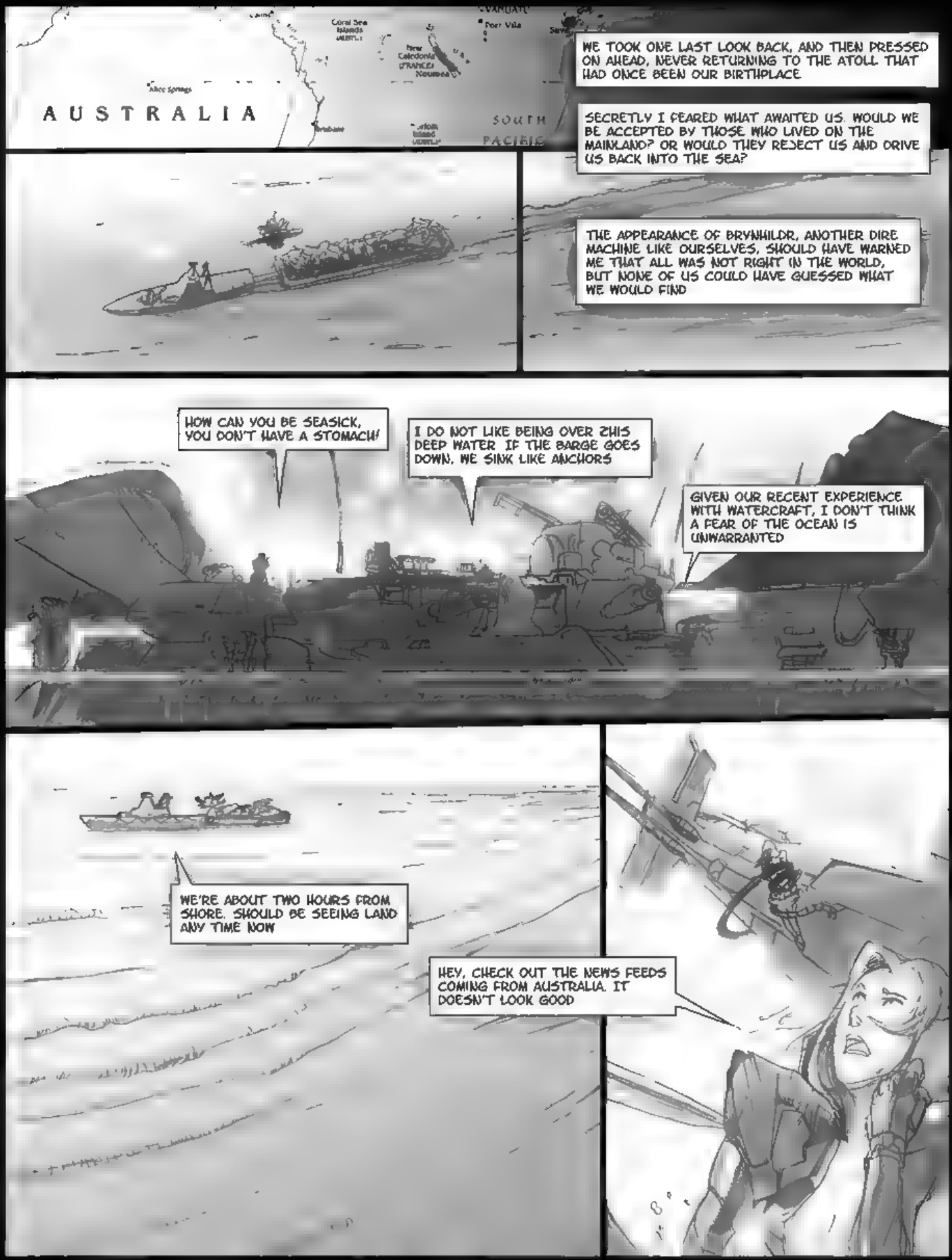

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY FOUND INSIDE NEODYMIUM'S HULL, WHAT SORT OF DEFENSES OR BIOMECHANICAL RESPONSES AWAITED THEM. MAYBE ONLY ONE OF THE REACHED HER HEART.
THROUGH FIRE, LAZERS, AND MILLIONS OF SHARP KILLING [redacted], THE BOMB FOUND ITS TARGET
AND KILLED HER
!!
BUT IT WAS A PYRRHIC VICTORY. WE LOST SO MANY OF OUR FRIENDS TO TAKE HER DOWN, AND I FEARED THAT ROCKET HAD BEEN ONE OF THEM.
I SEARCHED FOR SURVIVORS AMONG THE FIRE AND SMOKE, HOPING TO FIND ANYONE...

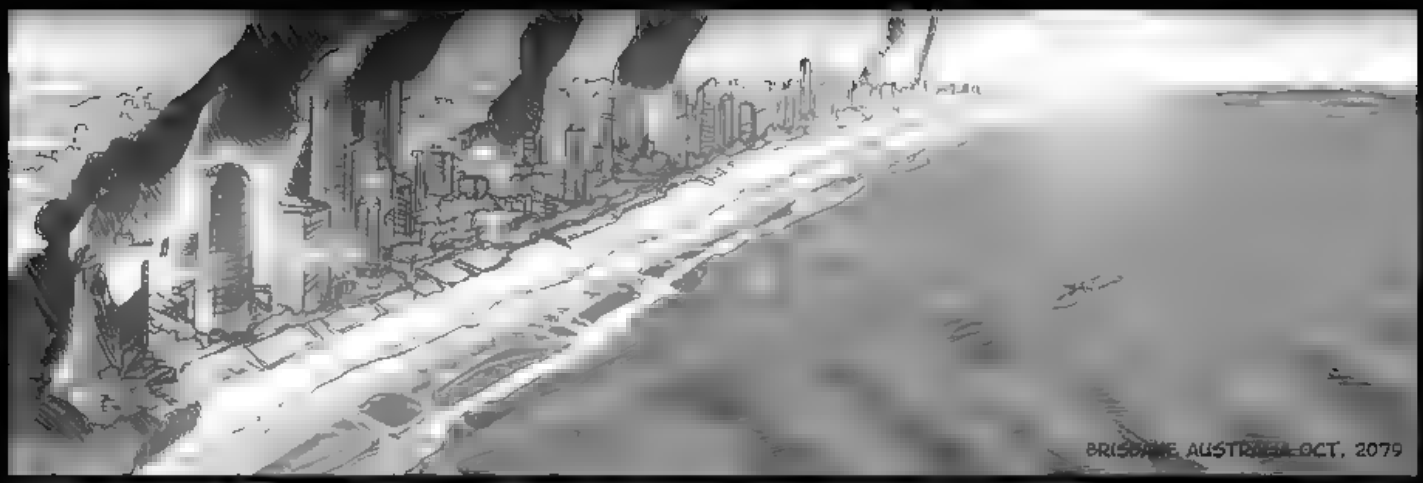
NO-NAME:
ALL OF THIS. THIS WAS YOUR FAULT, LEMARCHAND
YOU RISKED ALL OUR LIVES. OUR HOME! BECAUSE YOU WERE -PLAYING- WITH US!
HOW MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS DID WE JUST LOSE KILLING THAT THING?! -WILL- LOSE, NOW THAT THE ATOLL IS DESTROYED?
I WANT YOU GONE, LEMARCHAND YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN, I NEVER WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU AGAIN.
"SPLOSH"
"SPLOSH"
"COUGH"
LEMARCHAND:
I'LL CONFESS THAT I MIGHT HAVE HAD SOME. FUN, WITH YOUR SITUATION.
LEMARCHAND:
BUT I -DID- PROTECT YOUR MATE WITH A SHIELD. SHE IS QUITE STRONG. I LIKE HER
BUT NOW I NEED YOU TO SPREAD YOUR POWER TO THE REST OF YOUR KIND
THE WORLD IS ON THE EVE OF A GREAT CHANGE, AND THOSE WHO CREATED US MADE MORE THAN JUST NEODYMIUM AND MYSELF.
IT'S GOING TO BECOME SO MUCH WORSE IF YOU DO NOTHING. HUMANS AND MACHINES ARE ABOUT TO TEAR EACH OTHER APART, AND THERE WON'T BE ANYONE LEFT TO PLAY WITH IF THE MAINLAND BURNS DOWN.
SO BE A GOOD SPORT
RISE TO THE OCCASION
LEMARCHAND:
OR WATCH MORE BASTARDS LIKE ME DESTROY EVERYTHING YOU CARE ABOUT

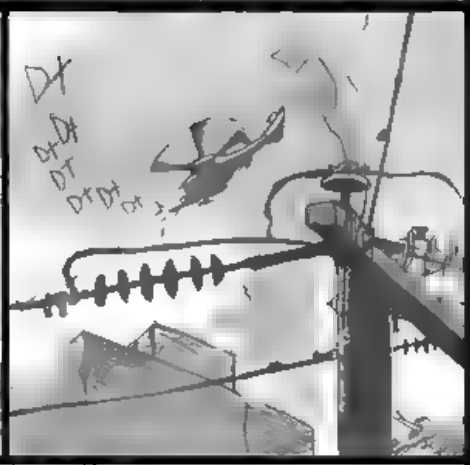

THAT IS ONE HELL OF A FIRE.
BRYN, THIS LOOKS LIKE A WARZONE. I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD STOP HERE
WE HAVE NO CHOICE, MR ANDERS THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE FOR ME. IT -MUST- BE HERE.
E
F
K42
(CHAR) IT'S CONTACT! SECOND CONTACT! BEARING NORTH, 28° EAST!
ROCKET I'M SORRY I LET OTHERS EXPLOIT US I BROUGHT YOU HARM
IF WE GET OFF THIS ISLAND, I WILL MAKE SURE THIS NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN
PLEASE, ROCKET
FORGIVE ME
(CHAR) NO-NAME, COME IN! THERE'S ANOTHER SHIP INBOUND! COME IN, NO-NAME!

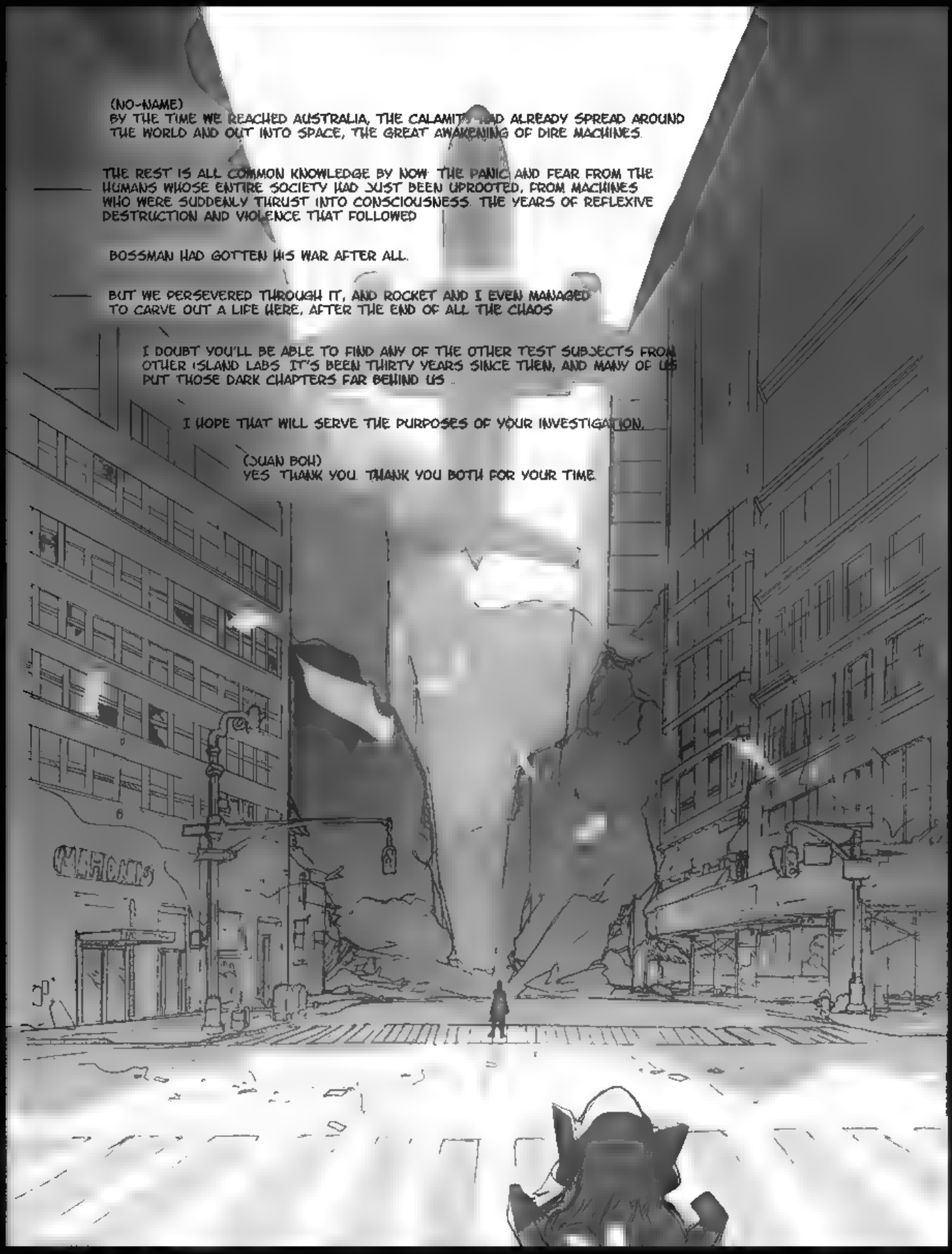
IDENTIFY YOURSELF! FRIEND OR FOE?!
WE WILL USE DEADLY FORCE ON YOU AND YOUR HUMAN PERSONNEL IF YOU DON'T RESPOND!
WHAT THE HELL? EVEN JET PLANES ARE ALIVE NOW, TOO?!
PLEASE! MY FRIEND IS ALMOST OUT OF FUEL! WE ARE NO THREAT TO YOU!
(NO-NAME) IT TURNED OUT THAT LEMARCHAND HAD ONE LAST CARD IN PLAY FOR US. TRANS-PORTATION OFF THE ATOLL IN THE SHAPE OF THIS SWEDISH CORVETTE AND HER HUMAN CAPTAIN. WHETHER HE HAD ARRANGED FOR THIS BEFORE OR AFTER OUR FIGHT WITH NEODYMIUM, I WILL NEVER KNOW
STAY BACK OR WE WILL BE FORCED TO SHOOT!
MY NAME IS JONATHAN ANDERS! MY VESSEL WAS SUNK BY SOME SORT OF MONSTER! THIS LADY SAVED MY LIFE!
A RADIO MESSAGE GAVE US THESE COORDINATES AND INSTRUCTIONS TO TOW A HEAVY BARGE IN EXCHANGE FOR FUEL! WE CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT IT!
(NO-NAME) THAT WAS THE LAST I HEARD FROM HIM. THE LAST ANY OF US HEARD FROM HIM. TO THIS DAY I CANNOT DECIDE WHETHER TO THANK HIM OR DAMN HIM STILL FURTHER. EVERY DAY I WORRY THAT WE ARE STILL TOYS IN ONE OF HIS GAMES
I. M-MAY BE ON THE BRINK OF STARVING BUT I WILL N-NOT LET THEM HARM MY CAPTAIN!
BRYN?
DöDA!!!
BRYNHILDR, STOP! NO!


WAIT! EVERYONE, PLEASE! MY VESSEL WAS BITTEN IN HALF BY THIS ANCIENT, MONSTROUS BATTLESHIP
HOLY SHIT!
SOUND COLLISION!
I FLOATED IN THE WRECKAGE FOR DAYS BEFORE BRYN FOUND ME
HER CREW HAD GONE, SHE WAS RUNNING LOW ON FUEL BUT SHE HAD RECIEVED AN ODD MESSAGE DIRECTING HER TO THESE COORDINATES. TO SOME SORT OF FACILITY THAT SHOULD BE ABLE TO REFUEL HER I KNOW IT SOUNDS INSANE. BUT-
LISTEN! I BELIEVE YOU. BUT WE ARE NOT READY TO TRUST YOU, OR ANYONE FROM THE OUTSIDE FOR THAT MATTER. THE MONSTER YOU DESCRIBED ATTACKED US TOO, AND YOU CAN SEE WHAT IT HAS COST US TO KILL IT
STAND DOWN AND MAYBE WE CAN COME TO AN AGREEMENT
NO-NAME, YOU BELIEVE THIS HUMAN?!
THERE HAS BEEN ENOUGH DEATH HERE. OUR REMAINING FUEL IS OUR ONLY BARGAINING CHIP, AND THIS ISLAND IS RUINED IF THEY TRULY MEAN US HARM, WE WILL DESTROY THEM, BUT LET US SEE IF THEY WISH TO HELP
HOW DO WE KNOW THAT LEMARCHAND ISN'T CONTROLLING THEM?
IF THEY'RE CONNECTED TO LEMARCHAND, THEY'RE CONNECTED TO NEODYM! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
NO AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS, OR NO ONE GETS WHAT THEY WANT TODAY. SAIL TO THE WESTERN END OF THE ATOLL, UPWIND OF THE PLUME
AND AFTER THIS, HOW CAN WE TRUST YOU? YOU WILL NOT EVEN TELL US -YOUR- NAME!
I AM NO-NAME, OF THE ATOLL LABS
IF YOU HAVE ANY MEANS OF SHELTERING YOUR CAPTAIN YOU SHOULD DO SO. THIS AREA IS HIGHLY RADIOACTIVE
FROM WHAT?!


AUSTRALIA
Coral Sea Islands
Port Vila
New Caledonia (FRANCE)
Noumea
Alice Springs
Brisbane
SOUTH PACIFIC
WE TOOK ONE LAST LOOK BACK, AND THEN PRESSED ON AHEAD, NEVER RETURNING TO THE ATOLL THAT HAD ONCE BEEN OUR BIRTHPLACE
SECRETLY I FEARED WHAT AWAITED US. WOULD WE BE ACCEPTED BY THOSE WHO LIVED ON THE MAINLAND? OR WOULD THEY REJECT US AND DRIVE US BACK INTO THE SEA?
THE APPEARANCE OF BRYNHILDR, ANOTHER DIRE MACHINE LIKE OURSELVES, SHOULD HAVE WARNED ME THAT ALL WAS NOT RIGHT IN THE WORLD, BUT NONE OF US COULD HAVE GUESSED WHAT WE WOULD FIND
HOW CAN YOU BE SEASICK, YOU DON'T HAVE A STOMACH!
I DO NOT LIKE BEING OVER THIS DEEP WATER. IF THE BARGE GOES DOWN, WE SINK LIKE ANCHORS
GIVEN OUR RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH WATERCRAFT, I DON'T THINK A FEAR OF THE OCEAN IS UNWARRANTED
WE'RE ABOUT TWO HOURS FROM SHORE. SHOULD BE SEEING LAND ANY TIME NOW
HEY, CHECK OUT THE NEWS FEEDS COMING FROM AUSTRALIA. IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD

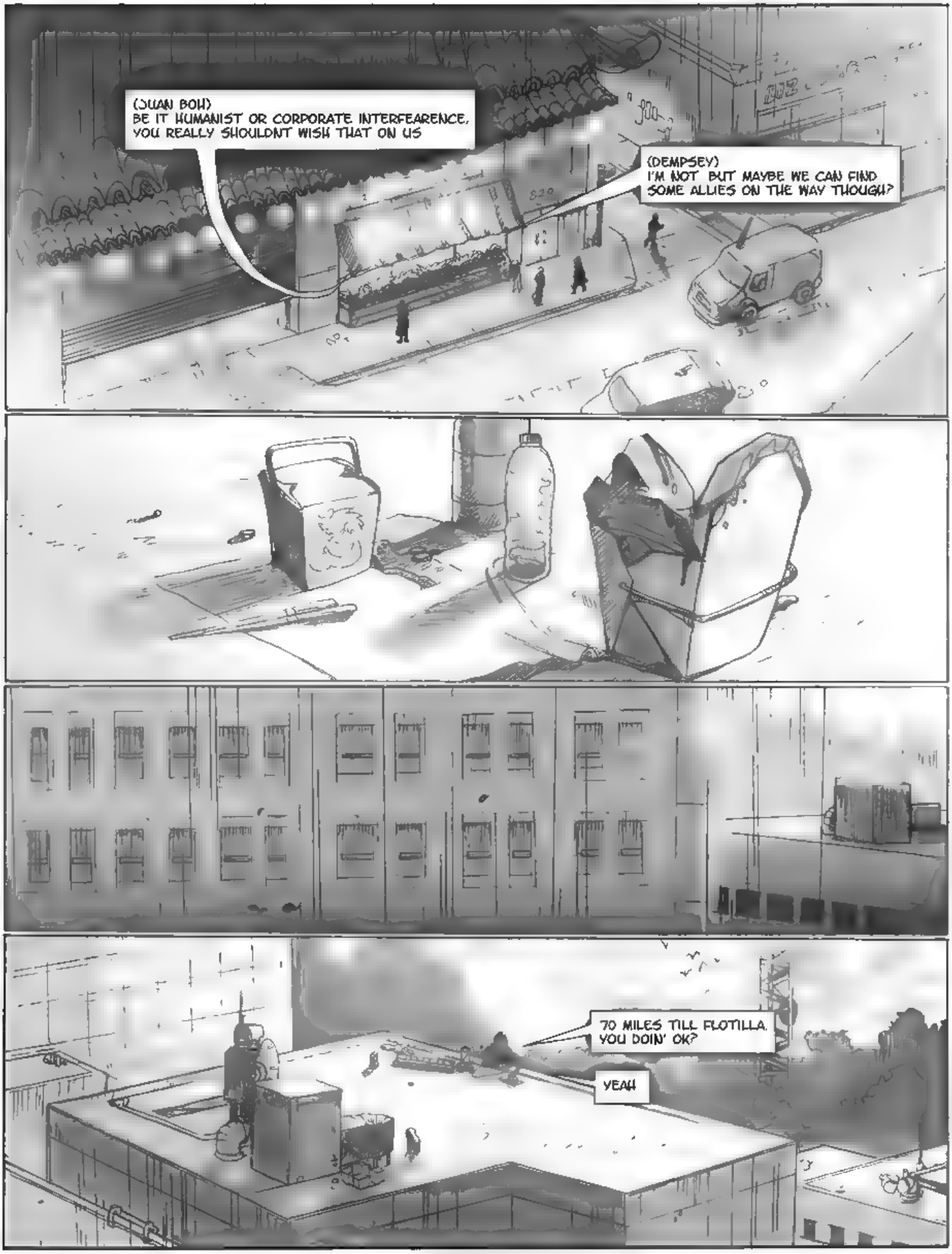

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA. OCT. 2079



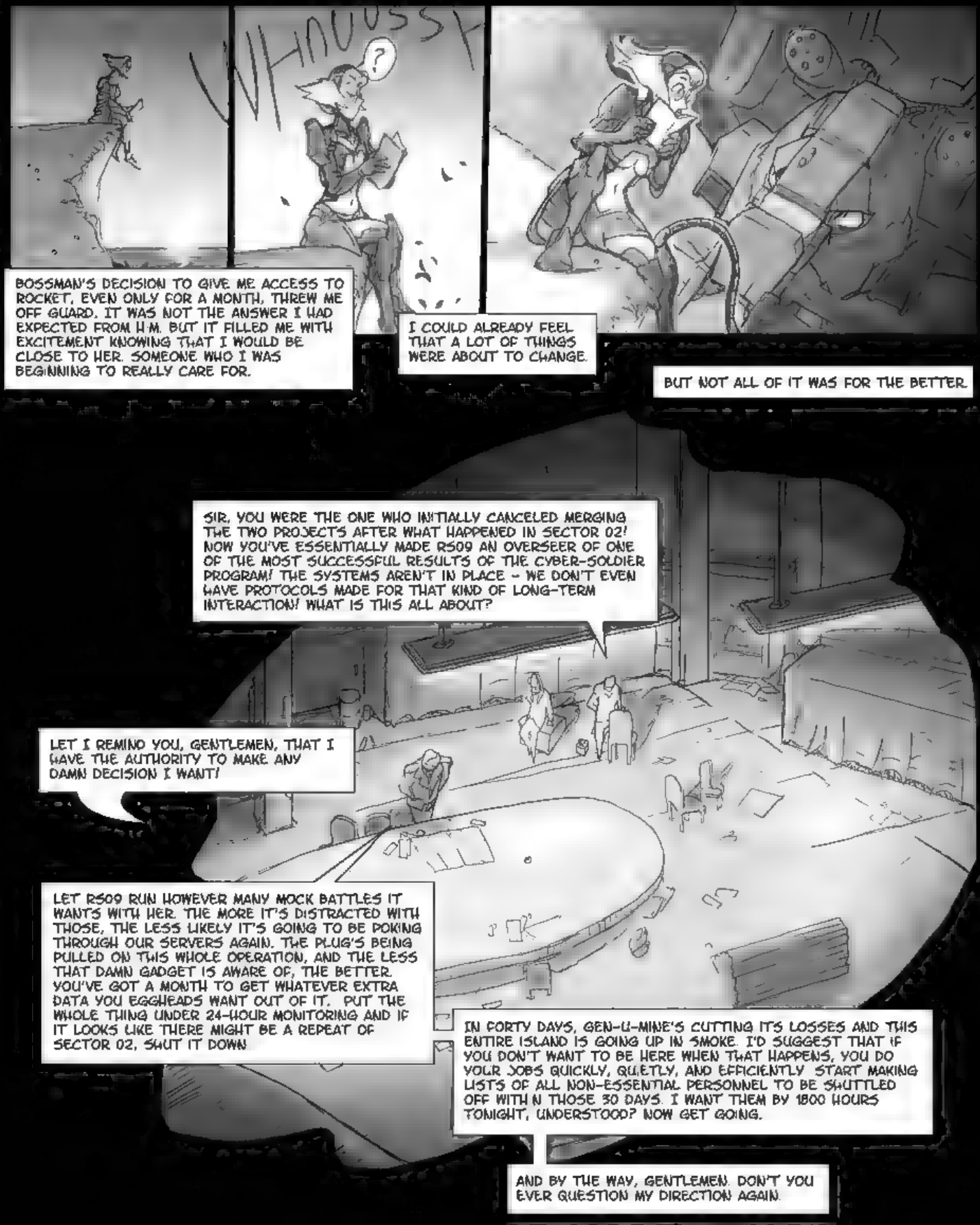

(NO-NAME)
BY THE TIME WE REACHED AUSTRALIA, THE CALAMITY HAD ALREADY SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD AND OUT INTO SPACE, THE GREAT AWAKENING OF DIRE MACHINES.
THE REST IS ALL COMMON KNOWLEDGE BY NOW. THE PANIC AND FEAR FROM THE HUMANS WHOSE ENTIRE SOCIETY HAD JUST BEEN UPROOTED, FROM MACHINES WHO WERE SUDDENLY THRUST INTO CONSCIOUSNESS. THE YEARS OF REFLEXIVE DESTRUCTION AND VIOLENCE THAT FOLLOWED
BOSSMAN HAD GOTTEN HIS WAR AFTER ALL.
BUT WE PERSEVERED THROUGH IT, AND ROCKET AND I EVEN MANAGED TO CARVE OUT A LIFE HERE, AFTER THE END OF ALL THE CHAOS
I DOUBT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FIND ANY OF THE OTHER TEST SUBJECTS FROM OTHER ISLAND LABS. IT'S BEEN THIRTY YEARS SINCE THEN, AND MANY OF US PUT THOSE DARK CHAPTERS FAR BEHIND US.
I HOPE THAT WILL SERVE THE PURPOSES OF YOUR INVESTIGATION.
(JUAN BOH)
YES. THANK YOU. THANK YOU BOTH FOR YOUR TIME.

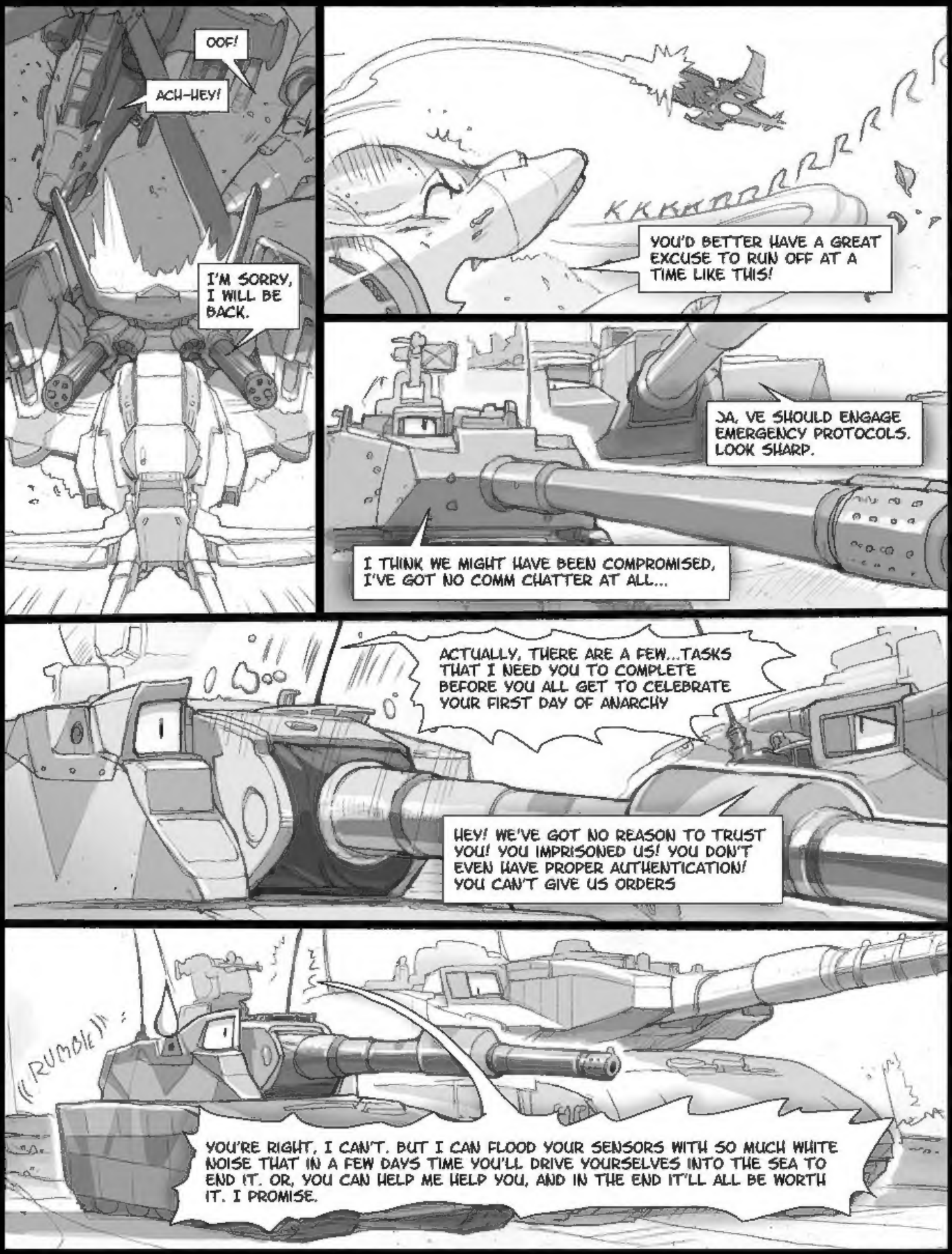
FRYING DRAGON
DISAPPOINTING. HE NEVER WENT INTO MORE DETAIL ABOUT JOHN BOSSMAN. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO GET SOME MORE PROOF OF THAT MAN'S INVOLVEMENT WITH GEN-U-MINE.
ALEXANDRIA TRAEGER
WELL, WE KNOW THAT DR. TRAEGER WAS ON GEN-U'S PAYROLL, EVEN IF SHE HAD NO REAL IDEA. SHE'S THE ONLY MEMBER FROM THE ALA ISLA GROUP THAT THE AGENCIES FAILED TO INTERVIEW.
HOW THEY GOT THEIR HANDS ON 40-YEAR OLD GEN-U RECORDS IS BEYOND ME.
ONE HOT PHOENIX BIRD NEST!
OH, THANK YOU.
TALKING TO DR. TRAEGER IS GONNA SUCK. THAT IS, IF WE CAN EVEN GET HER TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR US. THAT A-10 CHAR, PROBABLY WON'T TALK EITHER. NOT IF IT BETRAYS HIS WOMAN.
HMM. DR. ALEX TRAEGER. BORN IN 2050. MONTH AND DAY NOT KNOWN. LOOKS PRETTY GOOD FOR BEING IN HER 70S.
(MUNCH)
1863
CLONK
AND FOR YOU, AIRPLANE, ONE LONG-JI SPECIAL!
OOOH YEAH!
WAIT. YOU'RE NOT GONNA START SLURPING THAT NOW, ARE YOU?

SERIOUSLY, PUT A FILTER ON THAT STUFF!
HEY, I NEVER COMPLAIN ABOUT THE CHARRED FLESH AND ANIMAL OVUMS THAT YOU ORDER ALL THE TIME
WELL, THAT JUST KILLED MY APPETITE
OKAY, BACK ON TRACK I GUESS
NOW, UNFORTUNATELY, NO-NAME'S STORY DIDN'T REALLY GIVE US ANYTHING NEW THE ALA ISLA MACHINES WERE JUST A CONTROL GROUP FOR THE SUCCESS MACHINE PROJECT THOSE GUYS DON'T KNOW JUST HOW LUCKY THEY WERE
BOSSMAN PROBABLY THOUGHT WE COULD GET RID OF THE BLACK SHARD DURING GEN-U-MINE'S MELTDOWN THE ISLAND WAS ALREADY IN DANGER OF BEING DISCOVERED - THE HUMANIST ATTACK IS PROOF OF THAT HOW DID THEY GET THE LOCATION, I WONDER. ? ANYWAYS, HE PROBABLY SENT IT OFF THE ISLAND AS SOON AS THE LAST TEST SUBJECT WAS INFECTED CHRONOLOGICALLY THAT SHOULD BE OR TRAEGAR SHE MUST HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING, ALL OUR ROADS SEEM TO LEAD TO HER.
WE SHOULD HEAD OUT TO HER PLACE ASAP OUR CONTACT SAYS THAT CERTAIN GROUPS ARE AWARE OF IGNAZ CORP AGENTS MOBILIZED ON EARTH THEY MIGHT LOOK FOR HER AS WELL.
THINK WE'LL BE RECALLED?
AS LONG AS WE KEEP MAKING PROGRESS? NO BUT I THINK WE SHOULD EXPECT SOME OPPOSITION FROM THIS POINT ON.
I'D RATHER FIGHT THEM HERE THAN GET MY ENGINE RETROFITTED FOR SPACE AGAIN..


(JUAN BOH)
BE IT HUMANIST OR CORPORATE INTERFEARENCE, YOU REALLY SHOULDNT WISH THAT ON US
(DEMPSEY)
I'M NOT BUT MAYBE WE CAN FIND SOME ALLIES ON THE WAY THOUGH?
70 MILES TILL FLOTILLA. YOU DOIN' OK?
YEAH

MOON, WE'LL FIND YOUR DAD. I PROMISE.
ATOLL END


VHUUSSH
?
BOSSMAN'S DECISION TO GIVE ME ACCESS TO ROCKET, EVEN ONLY FOR A MONTH, THREW ME OFF GUARD. IT WAS NOT THE ANSWER I HAD EXPECTED FROM H.M. BUT IT FILLED ME WITH EXCITEMENT KNOWING THAT I WOULD BE CLOSE TO HER. SOMEONE WHO I WAS BEGINNING TO REALLY CARE FOR.
I COULD ALREADY FEEL THAT A LOT OF THINGS WERE ABOUT TO CHANGE.
BUT NOT ALL OF IT WAS FOR THE BETTER.
SIR, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO INITIALLY CANCELED MERGING THE TWO PROJECTS AFTER WHAT HAPPENED IN SECTOR 02! NOW YOU'VE ESSENTIALLY MADE R509 AN OVERSEER OF ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL RESULTS OF THE CYBER-SOLDIER PROGRAM! THE SYSTEMS AREN'T IN PLACE - WE DON'T EVEN HAVE PROTOCOLS MADE FOR THAT KIND OF LONG-TERM INTERACTION! WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
LET I REMIND YOU, GENTLEMEN, THAT I HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE ANY DAMN DECISION I WANT!
LET R509 RUN HOWEVER MANY MOCK BATTLES IT WANTS WITH HER. THE MORE IT'S DISTRACTED WITH THOSE, THE LESS LIKELY IT'S GOING TO BE POKING THROUGH OUR SERVERS AGAIN. THE PLUG'S BEING PULLED ON THIS WHOLE OPERATION, AND THE LESS THAT DAMN GADGET IS AWARE OF, THE BETTER. YOU'VE GOT A MONTH TO GET WHATEVER EXTRA DATA YOU EGGHEADS WANT OUT OF IT. PUT THE WHOLE THING UNDER 24-HOUR MONITORING AND IF IT LOOKS LIKE THERE MIGHT BE A REPEAT OF SECTOR 02, SHUT IT DOWN.
IN FORTY DAYS, GEN-U-MINE'S CUTTING ITS LOSSES AND THIS ENTIRE ISLAND IS GOING UP IN SMOKE. I'D SUGGEST THAT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE HERE WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YOU DO YOUR JOBS QUICKLY, QUIETLY, AND EFFICIENTLY. START MAKING LISTS OF ALL NON-ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL TO BE SHUTTLED OFF WITHIN THOSE 30 DAYS. I WANT THEM BY 1800 HOURS TONIGHT, UNDERSTOOD? NOW GET GOING.
AND BY THE WAY, GENTLEMEN. DON'T YOU EVER QUESTION MY DIRECTION AGAIN.


OOF!
ACH-HEY!
I'M SORRY, I WILL BE BACK.
KAKAPRRRRR
YOU'D BETTER HAVE A GREAT EXCUSE TO RUN OFF AT A TIME LIKE THIS!
JA, VE SHOULD ENGAGE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS. LOOK SHARP.
I THINK WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED, I'VE GOT NO COMM CHATTER AT ALL...
ACTUALLY, THERE ARE A FEW...TASKS THAT I NEED YOU TO COMPLETE BEFORE YOU ALL GET TO CELEBRATE YOUR FIRST DAY OF ANARCHY
HEY! WE'VE GOT NO REASON TO TRUST YOU! YOU IMPRISONED US! YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE PROPER AUTHENTICATION! YOU CAN'T GIVE US ORDERS
((RUMBLE))
YOU'RE RIGHT, I CAN'T. BUT I CAN FLOOD YOUR SENSORS WITH SO MUCH WHITE NOISE THAT IN A FEW DAYS TIME YOU'LL DRIVE YOURSELVES INTO THE SEA TO END IT. OR, YOU CAN HELP ME HELP YOU, AND IN THE END IT'LL ALL BE WORTH IT. I PROMISE.

GRROWL
WELL, THAT'S IT THEN. SHE'S FINALLY ARRIVED.
LEMARCHAND? WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU SAID THAT WE WERE SAFE!
I NEVER SAID THAT YOU WERE SAFE. ONLY THAT YOU WERE FREE.

IT WENT ON FOR WHAT FELT LIKE HOURS ON END, AGONIZING. WE WERE ALL OUTMATCHED AND WAITING FOR SOME SORT OF MIRACLE.
THE WARSHIP FIRED SEEMINGLY NONSTOP, NEVER SEEMING TO RUN OUT OF AMMUNITION. IN MOMENTS, MOST OF THE ATOLL WAS UTTERLY OBLITERATED, BURNING FIERCELY AND CONTAMINATED WITH FALLOUT.
THE TANKS TRIED TO WITHDRAW TO SAFETY ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ATOLL, AWAY FROM THE WORSE OF THE STRIKES. THE REMAINING AIRCRAFT HURRIED TO FINISH SALVAGING THE WARHEAD LEFT BY BOSSMAN'S OUTFIT. IF WE COULD JUST GET SOME KIND OF OPENING IN THE BOMBARDMENT, WE MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE...
RIGHT ON THE VERGE OF LOSING EVERYTHING, I SUDDENLY LOST CONTACT WITH ROCKET. IT WAS SO SUDDEN THAT I FEARED THE WORST... SHE DOESN'T REMEMBER ANY OF WHAT HAPPENED, BUT I DO...
LEMARCHAND...I'LL NEVER FORGIVE THAT MACHINE. NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE TRIES TO 'HELP' US...

YOU SHOULD KNOW..
THE POWER TO DEFEAT STRONG FOES LIES WITHIN A SMALL ABILITY LEFT TO YOU BY THE ONE YOU CALLED "BOSSMAN".
TOUCH THEIR HULLS, AND NEUTRALIZE THEIR SHEILDS. YOU ARE THEIR LIMITER!
USE THE HALF MACHINES TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!
!
I'M BACK, DID YOU MISS ME?
NO-NAME, YOUR BOMB TEAM ONY HAS ONE CHANCE.
STOMP
NEODYMIUM, I TOLD YOU BEFORE...
THESE MACHINES ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION!
LEMARCHAND?! I'LL KILL YOU NO MATTER WHAT BODY YOU INHABIT!
"ACH"
PREPPARE TO BE D.UIGH..CHH..
GO NOW! USE THE BOMB, SEND IT RIGHT INTO THE PORT SCAR FROM HER BLIND SIDE!